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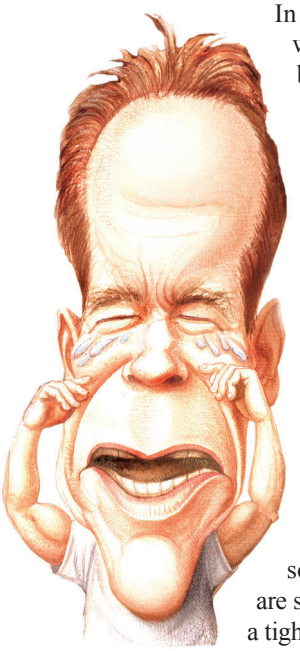
Letters

Girly from the Start



In "Governor Girly-Man" (March 9), Steven F. Hayward does a very fine job detailing California's recent budgetary history and the disappointing fiscal performance of Governor Schwarzenegger. However, I wish Hayward had spent more time describing Schwarzenegger's unwillingness to promote a spending limit in the weeks that followed his inauguration. Nearly all the Republican candidates in the 2003 recall election, including Bill Simon, Tom McClintock, and Schwarzenegger himself, promised tight spending limits in their fiscal-reform packages.

Furthermore, after the recall election, Schwarzenegger was in a unique position. California was facing its worst-ever budget crisis, and Schwarzenegger had the political capital necessary to push for serious fiscal-policy reforms. Unfortunately, he abandoned his promise and compromised with Democrats on some incremental budget reforms. Today, Californians are still paying for his unwillingness to aggressively pursue a tight spending limit.

Michael J. New
Visiting Fellow, Witherspoon Institute
Assistant Professor, University of Alabama

Movies with Messages

Your piece on "the best conservative movies" (February 23) was cute. It was also a little silly. The whole idea of a "conservative movie" is a little silly. So is the idea of a "liberal movie." Sure, movies express ideas; and sure, the value of a work of art may consist partly in what it teaches us; and sure, it's fine to note, as fact, that a movie appeals to this group more than that one. But parts of your list came pretty close to making ideology an aesthetic criterion, perhaps the primary one. Take Number 8, *Juno*. What you published gives me no reason to think this movie is well-made; you say only that it promotes doctrines you agree with.

I was also a little put off by the self-congratulatory introduction. "Because conservatives love movies . . ." you write—as though to remind us how very special we are. (Do liberals not love movies too?)

Sonja Rossett
Elko, Nev.

JUNO: FOX SEARCHLIGHT

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The Week

■ Perhaps somebody should advise the suave diplomats in the Obama administration that the most reassuring symbol of U.S.-Russia relations is not a big red button.

■ David Broder sounded the call, just before the spring peepers: "The Obama honeymoon is over." Other establishment commentators and pollsters—Howard Fineman, David Brooks, Douglas Schoen, Scott Rasmussen—have weighed in with similar judgments ("These are not little Rush Limbaughs," Broder pointed out). Broder et al. are noting the tug of political gravity, which was to be expected after an inaugural ascent as gaseous as Obama's. It has been strengthened by the circumstances Obama finds himself in, and his response to them. The recession and the credit crunch, hyped to Great Depression status by Obama himself, would be stumpers for any politician. Obama has addressed them with strategic hubris: He wants to fix not only the economy, but health care, energy, and education, all in one swoop. All this he proposes to accomplish with tactical timidity (his default first move is to let congressional barons propose solutions) and an executive team that can give him nothing better (tax-challenged Timothy Geithner at Treasury has yet to staff his department). Obama remains popular, and the Republicans, leaderless and bickering among themselves, are quite unpopular. But the classes and the masses both are getting the wind up.

■ In his first weeks on the job as chairman of the RNC, Michael Steele has been a gaffe-production factory. In the latest incident, he made garbled remarks on abortion that sounded pro-choice and then had to explain that he is still, as he has always been, pro-life. Some Republicans are urging Steele to avoid the spotlight and instead work on fundraising and organization. It's bad advice. Steele won the RNC chairmanship largely on the strength of his communication skills. He ought to be able to master both the low-profile and high-profile aspects of his job.

■ The Rush wars continue with a *Newsweek* cover story by David Frum ("Why Rush Is Wrong"). It is hard to jump into a bar fight when both contestants are old friends. Rush Limbaugh assumes special political stature when politicians themselves are anemic, as they usually are in minority parties at the beginning of a presidential cycle (NR ran a cover story on Rush, entitled "The Leader of the Opposition," in 1993—just after Bill Clinton's shellacking of the elder Bush). When some politician emerges—as Newt Gingrich did in 1994—Rush reassumes his wonted role, as an expounder of conservative ideas, suited to his medium and his particular take on things. Sometimes we disagree with his take, as when we said, contra his recent speech to the Conservative Political Action Conference, that repeating the old principles will not carry us to victory (we also have to suit them to current events and present political opportunities). Mostly we are on the same wavelength. Which is a good thing, because Rush is not going anywhere, and it's futile to wish he would. Let's all try to do our jobs better, and not tweak one of our number who does his job surpassingly well.

See page 14

ROMAN GENN

■ Charles Freeman withdrew his name from consideration for the chairmanship of the National Intelligence Council after being criticized, mostly for his ties to the Saudis and his support for China's crackdown on democracy activists in Tiananmen Square. He blamed the controversy over his nomination on the "Israel Lobby," writing that "the aim of this Lobby is control of the policy process through the exercise of a veto over the appointment of people who dispute the wisdom of its views." (What political group doesn't have this aim?) Never mind that Nancy Pelosi, an advocate of human rights in China, reportedly killed the nomination. Perhaps the most dismaying aspect of the affair is that David Broder, the somnolent dean of Beltway journalism, credited Freeman's conspiracy theory. Paranoid views about the Jewish state and its supporters seem to be everywhere these days. That is not conspiracy, but poison.

■ On the matter of insurance giant AIG, President Obama has been milking two issues—employee bonuses and payments to foreign counterparties—but he is talking through his hat. AIG was contractually obliged to pay its bonuses; if Obama

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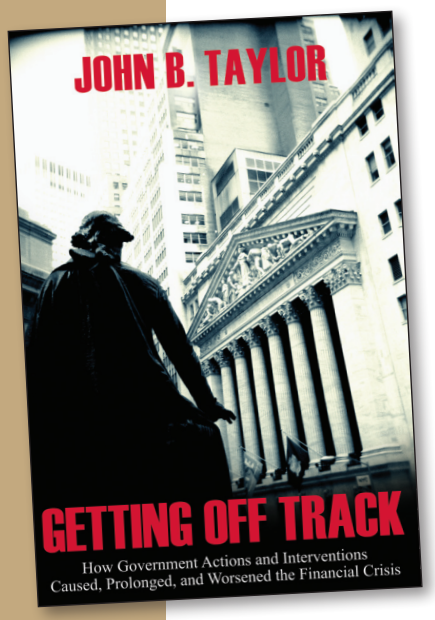
From the Author of *Global Financial Warriors*


JOHN B. TAYLOR
GETTING OFF TRACK
How Government Actions and Interventions Caused, Prolonged, and Worsened the Financial Crisis

Getting Off Track

How Government Actions and Interventions Caused, Prolonged, and Worsened the Financial Crisis

by John B. Taylor

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> - **Anna Schwartz**, author, with Milton Friedman, of *The Great Contraction, 1929–1933*

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John B. Taylor is the Bowen H. and Janice Arthur McCoy Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution and the Mary and Robert Raymond Professor of Economics at Stanford University.

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had wanted to demand concessions from the firm's employees, as the government did in the case of the autoworker unions, he could have done so when AIG came back for a fourth serving of bailout bucks on March 2. Instead, the president makes speeches, congressmen fulminate, and Andrew Cuomo subpoenas the paycheck stubs of private citizens. Now Senate Democrats are trying to concoct a 91 percent excise tax to punish AIG executives—but, since it's unconstitutional to target a particular firm in that way, other financial-services employees almost certainly will be dragged into the fracas. Obama can hardly complain about AIG's current leadership or the structure of its bailout, given that his Treasury secretary, Tim Geithner, helped put both in place. Equally phony is outrage that much of AIG's bailout money has been used to pay off domestic and foreign banks that served as counterparties in AIG credit-default swaps. Sane people desire that these financial institutions meet their obligations: That was the point of the bailout in the first place. Sending another wave of wealth destruction through the markets in a fit of populist pique would be a mighty high price to pay for the pleasure of tweaking the Bank of Montreal. But if Obama really wants to reopen the AIG bailout, he is the president of the United States, which owns 80 percent of the firm–it's his mess.

■ As usual, Congress failed to pass its annual appropriations bills on time. Instead, it rolled up all of its overdue work into what's known as an "omnibus spending bill." This one, a 1,130-page, $410 billion monstrosity, increased domestic spending by 8 percent over last year and contained more than 8,000 earmarks. (Obama shrugged off his pledge to veto bills that contain earmarks and signed the omnibus without hesitation.) Eight Senate Republicans—six of whom serve on the Appropriations Committee—joined the Democrats in voting for the bill, demonstrating that conservatives have very little hope of stopping big annual spending increases.

Obama's New Math

I SHARE this little cubby at the front of the magazine with an economist of national renown. He uses lots of charts and graphs, and when he adds up percentages, the sum actually comes to 100. So the last thing I want to do is poach on his territory. Still, there's something that's been gnawing at me. It's a vague suspicion, a ghost at the edge of conscious thought, a formless query that defies easy articulation. But I will try to put it into words:

What the hell is Barack Obama talking about?

On almost any given day, Obama insists that his predecessor caught small children in a butterfly net and cooked them in hot oil. Oh, wait, sorry; that's Bill Moyers. What Obama goes on and on about is how President Bush was a tightwad who refused to spend a dime on vital domestic priorities. Here's Obama responding to the charge that he's doing too much: "To kick these problems down the road for another four years or another eight years would be to continue the same irresponsibility that led us to this point."

In his address to Congress, Obama constructed a Potemkin army of straw men, and they were all Republicans and conservatives: "I reject the view that . . . says government has no role in laying the foundation for our common prosperity." In another speech he boldly rejected "a philosophy that says every problem can be solved if only government would step out of the way; that if government were just dismantled, divvied up into tax breaks, and handed out to the wealthiest among us, it would somehow benefit us all. Such knee-jerk disdain for government—this constant rejection of any common endeavor—cannot rebuild our levees or our roads or our bridges."

Ah, yes, I believe it was Milton Friedman who said, "Bridges must never be rebuilt." Just for the record, I reject a philosophy that says we must spend trillions to stimulate the economy just because vests have no sleeves and cats bathe themselves with spit.

Anyway, Obama often goes on to lament the deficit he "inherited" from George W. Bush, suggesting that if only someone like Barack Obama had been at the helm these last eight years, things would be better.

So here's what I don't get (and, again, my apologies to Mr. Economist Guy). Spending under George W. Bush went through the roof: education (up 58 percent), Social Security (17 percent), Medicare (51 percent), health research and regulation (55 percent), highways and mass transit (22 percent), and veterans' benefits (59 percent). Spending grew twice as fast under Bush as it did under Clinton. But Obama thinks that amounts to laissez-faire.

To recap: Obama says Bush ignored necessary spending, which is why our new president needs to borrow $7 trillion just to spend enough money to catch up to where we should be. But he goes on to suggest that if he—or some other responsible party/messiah/lightworker type—had been running the show, we wouldn't have this Republican-fueled deficit that he inherited, because Democrats would have spent two, three, or ten times as much money as Republicans. Something doesn't compute there.

But, hey, I'm no economist.

—JONAH GOLDBERG

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■ Obama's budget director, Peter Orszag, said the administration might be open to taxing employer-provided health benefits. When John McCain proposed the idea last year, Obama denounced it in a series of ads as a middle-class tax increase. But neither Orszag nor anyone else in the administration is talking, as McCain did, about coupling the tax hike with a new tax break for individually purchased health insurance. This plan thus really would increase taxes on the middle class, and disrupt people's health-care arrangements to boot. Moving away from a subsidized employer-based health-care system to something more market-friendly would be terrific. Moving away from employer coverage to a more government-centered system, as Obama appears to want to do, is a mistake.

■ Mexico threatened to impose new tariffs on American products in response to a move by Congress to block Mexican truckers at the border. Obama is scrambling to find a solution that satisfies everyone, but trying to have it both ways on trade is what got him into this mess. Although the president says he understands the value of free trade, his U.S. trade representative, Ron Kirk, sounds more skeptical. For starters, Kirk says that the pending U.S.–South Korea Free Trade Agreement "simply isn't acceptable." Never mind that the deal would add an estimated $10 billion to $12 billion to annual GDP and around $10 billion to annual merchandise exports: Organized labor has called the tune. Trade agreements offer a cost-free way to stimulate the economy and strengthen ties with important allies, but Obama has decided that he cannot afford to alienate his left-wing base. His administration will try to straighten out the Mexican-trucking situation, and it might move forward on the tiny U.S.-Panama deal, but deals with Colombia and Korea — as well as the stalled Doha Round of world trade talks — are dead on arrival.

■ While rescinding President Bush's stem-cell-research funding policies, President Obama congratulated himself for keeping politics out of science. The boast is empty. Obama did not lift all restrictions on human experimentation, and he spoke against the use of cloning to create human babies. What are these policies if not political interference with science—and laudable interference at that? Under Obama's new rules, taxpayers will be encouraging the destruction of human embryos for research purposes. At a minimum, those embryos will include the "leftovers" from fertility clinics. He has left it to the federal science bureaucracy to decide whether they will also include cloned embryos created for the purpose of experiments. Taxpayer funding for cloning has never been widely debated and, if Obama has his way, never will be.

■ At his March 10 speech on education, Obama was not so bold as to take credit for inventing the Internet, but he did claim that federal funding of science and engineering education "made possible somebody like a Sergei Brin to attend graduate school and found an upstart company called Google that would forever change our world." Thank you, Mother Government. He went on to gripe about "the same old debate" in education-policy circles: "It's more money versus more reform, vouchers versus the status quo." So he apparently decided to declare a victor, calling for massive new spending on education—there's $44 billion of it in the "stimulus" bill—and saying not a peep about the tiny school-choice program for poor kids in Washington, D.C., that congressional Democrats are desperate to ban. Obama tried to seize the mantle of reform by praising charter schools and merit pay for teachers. But these ideas are almost completely absent from the legislation he has actually supported or enacted. Making them real would require engaging in one of those tired, old debates that he so despises—a debate against the teacher unions.

■ Obama's wartime detention policy takes cynicism to new heights. It is not a new policy; it is the Bush administration's old policy. There are some crumbs to satisfy those in Obama's hard-Left base who actually believed the hopey-change campaign rhetoric: Detainees won't be *called* "enemy combatants" anymore, and the administration purports not to be relying on the commander-in-chief's inherent constitutional powers to hold them without trial. But we are still going to hold them. The Justice Department explained to a federal court that under the international law of war and Congress's post-9/11 authorization of military force, the president has unilateral power to imprison anyone he judges to be providing substantial assistance to our terrorist enemies—with no requirement that such persons be apprehended on a traditional battlefield or have committed an act of terrorism. Of course, when Bush took this position, the Left was in froth-flecked rebellion, but now there's nothing more than some harmless grumbling from the ACLU. Sighs of relief on the national-security Right may be premature, however. By apparently forswearing his constitutional war powers, Obama is betting he can prosecute war under the direction of courts (including international tribunals) and an anti-war Congress. We have our doubts.

Obama's wartime detention policy takes cynicism to new heights. It is not a new policy; it is the Bush administration's old policy.

■ During the campaign, then-Senator Obama ripped Bush's use of executive signing statements, issued upon the signing of legislation into law, as a brazen snub of Congress on the road to an imperial presidency. Now, in signing that omnibus spending (and spending, and spending) bill, Obama has had yet another epiphany. Turns out he won't abide—he decreed in his first signing statement—"legislative aggrandizements" that usurp executive powers. He is also quite put off by sundry provisions that "unduly interfere with my constitutional authority," and which will thus be ignored. Call it the audacity of continuity.

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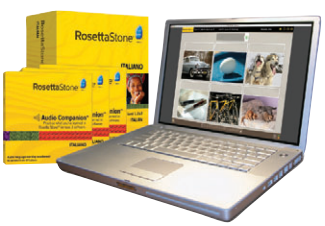

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■ For decades the Voting Rights Act has been read to forbid any changes to the borders of congressional districts that would "dilute" the political power of blacks and Hispanics. The Supreme Court has just ruled that the act forbids such dilution only in districts that are majority-black or majority-Hispanic. Justices Clarence Thomas and Antonin Scalia concurred with the ruling but noted that the act, as written, does not forbid any type of vote dilution. Racial gerrymandering is a troubling enough practice without being imposed lawlessly by courts.

■ Not many people get excited about "federal preemption," but what is at issue is how much of the national economy trial lawyers get to carve up. The Constitution limits federal power, but it also limits the power of state governments to interfere with interstate commerce. The Supreme Court has stopped enforcing both limits. In *Wyeth* v. *Levine*, it has just ruled that having FDA-compliant warnings on their drugs does not protect pharmaceutical companies from lawsuits in state courts. (National law, that is, does not "preempt" state law.) Instead of a national standard, then, we will have whatever results from the scrum of lawsuits in 50 states—with a bias in favor of whichever state's courts are most aggressive. In other words, we will now see the chaos of our product-liability system brought to bear on medicine. The litigation explosion did not just happen. It is the result of an ongoing breakdown in federalism.

■ With at least 3 percent of the population infected with HIV, possibly twice that number, AIDS stands at epidemic rates in Washington, D.C. The story is bleak, and it is familiar: Black men and men in their forties have the highest rates of infection, at 7 percent for both groups, with male homosexual acts the leading vector of transmission, followed by heterosexual activity and intravenous drug use. For a sense of proportion, consider that the percentage of Washingtonians living with HIV is six times that of the general U.S. population living with cancer. In the case of AIDS, as in the cases of crime and the corruption of civic institutions, Washington is a Third World enclave in the United States. Worse than that, in fact: HIV is more prevalent in Washington than in Somalia.

■ China has enjoyed a surge of growth comparable to the biblical seven fat years, fueled largely by exports to the United States. It has plowed its savings back into U.S. Treasuries—a symbiosis nicknamed Chimerica. Chinese premier Wen Jiabao recently worried in public about the investment: "President Obama and his new government have adopted a series of measures to deal with the financial crisis. We have expectations as to the effects of these measures. . . . Of course we are concerned about the safety of our assets." President Obama responded with encouraging words. "There's a reason why even in the midst of this economic crisis, you've seen actual increases in investment flows . . . into the United States. I think it's a recognition that the stability not only of our economic system but our political system is extraordinary." Our political system, certainly; and the Chinese, for all their totalitarian zeal, can only envy us. Our economic system is also stable, in the sense that we would never default. But since Obama and his congressional allies are taking on a trillion new dollars of debt to fund all their favorite projects, the Chinese premier is right to be worried. Communist rentiers of the world, unite.

■ The first foreign-policy crisis of George W. Bush's presidency came in April 2001, when the Chinese forced down a U.S. surveillance plane. History seemed about to repeat itself on March 8, this time at sea. The unarmed U.S. Navy surveillance vessel *Impeccable* was conducting operations in international waters near Hainan Island, a few dozen miles from where the 2001 incident took place. Five Chinese boats approached, the sailors waving Chinese flags and shouting at *Impeccable* to leave the area. *Impeccable* turned fire hoses on one boat, but the crew stripped to their underwear and continued their harassment. Probably the Chinese thought a show of national self-assertion wouldn't hurt ahead of the meeting of our two nations' presidents at the April 2 G-20 summit. Probably they are also keen to strike poses for the benefit of China's legions of hyper-nationalist young college graduates, whose numbers have been swollen by a recent expansion of higher education, but who have trouble finding jobs in a slowing economy. This year is the 20th anniversary of the Tiananmen student movement, and the 90th anniversary of an even bigger movement that radically changed China's political culture. It is the perfect time for some assertive nationalism.

■ When British prime minister Gordon Brown called on Barack Obama, he brought rare and thoughtful gifts: a pen holder and a framed commission from Royal Navy ships used against the slave trade, and a first edition of Martin Gilbert's biography of Winston Churchill. Obama, like a harried father who hit Kmart at 8:00 P.M. on Christmas Eve, reciprocated with a set of DVDs. Brown did his dour Scottish best to feign delight. There was no trip to Camp David, no formal dinner, no joint press conference with flags, and no Churchill bust in the Oval Office (Obama was so eager to send it back to England that he couldn't wait until after Brown's visit). An Obama aide explained to the U.K.'s *Sunday Telegraph*: "There's nothing special about Britain. You're just the same as the other 190 countries in the world. You shouldn't expect special treatment." Perhaps if Britain, our staunch ally in Iraq and Afghanistan, threatened to set off one of its nuclear weapons, it would get a friendlier welcome.

■ France is rejoining NATO, Pres. Nicolas Sarkozy has announced. He claims to be the heir of Gaullism, but General de Gaulle must be turning in his grave. He it was who in 1966 kicked Americans out of their bases in France and withdrew from the alliance. The alleged refusal of American administrations to recognize the grandeur of France had bred in the general a resentment that went deep into French society. In actual fact, the pull of NATO proved too strong, and French snubbing of the alliance was mostly attitudinizing. France continued to contribute money and troops, and by the 1990s was attending defense meetings, participating in exercises and even operations—for instance, sending aircraft to Bosnia. At this moment French troops are in Afghanistan under NATO auspices. In the

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future, several hundred French officers will be able to take up NATO jobs and France will be allotted two commands concerned with planning. Latter-day Gaullists and the socialist Left in France are horrified by what they perceive as a cave-in to the United States, but quite a few commentators are suggesting that Sarkozy's true aim is to build a European army and that he is making this gesture of rejoining NATO in the hope that the United States will not stand in the way of the one military initiative that really matters to him.

■ Two British soldiers stationed in Northern Ireland were members of a unit on the eve of being posted to Afghanistan. Their kit was ready. For a last-minute party, they ordered pizzas. As they waited outside the barracks, gunmen opened fire, killing them both, and wounding four others, including those delivering the pizzas. Two days later, gunmen shot dead a policeman, a Catholic with a record of long service. The Troubles, as the Irish call them, have started up. Actually, they never quite ended. There have been several terror attacks in the recent past, none of them fatal, and only lately a very sophisticated car bomb was defused. For the shootings, the police have arrested three suspects who belong to dissident IRA groups, said to number up to 300. Youths are once again in the streets throwing Molotov cocktails and rioting. Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness, the old-style IRA leaders, have made some pretty cold and unfeeling statements, and the former has been in the U.S., fundraising as usual. What's different this time is that they are in a power-sharing government trying to carry out a peace process, and the local population, Catholic as well as Protestant, is evidently, vociferously, almost unanimously disgusted with violence.

■ Obama has sent what the *New York Times* describes as a "secret letter" to Russian president Dmitri Medvedev. Its not-so-secret contents threaten to undo several of the Bush administration's most significant gains in the area of missile defense. The missive to Moscow supposedly offers the Russians a deal: If they help prevent Iran from developing long-range missiles, Obama will pull the plug on a NATO-approved missile-defense system in Eastern Europe. This is a high price to pay for Russia's cooperation, which may not materialize. In fact, abandoning the missile-defense project—which involves building a radar in the Czech Republic and basing a few interceptors in Poland—would force European allies to question America's commitment to their security and convince Russian leaders that bullying has its rewards. Obama's offer raises the risk that the United States will be left vulnerable to precisely the form of nuclear blackmail from Tehran that missile defense seeks to frustrate.

■ There are few U.S. ambassadorships as important as the one in Iraq. And we have enjoyed in that post three highly qualified men: John Negroponte, Zalmay Khalilzad, and Ryan Crocker. President Obama has nominated an ambassador of his own: Christopher Hill. Under George W. Bush (and, perhaps more to the point, Condoleezza Rice), Hill was chief U.S. negotiator in the North Korean disarmament talks. He was far too eager to accommodate the North Koreans, and naïve about the threats we face. He also appeared indifferent to human rights. Moreover, he has no experience in the Middle East. There is nervousness in Iraq about Hill. For one thing—no small thing—will he wish to be as accommodating of Iraq's nuclearizing neighbor, Iran, as he was of North Korea? In a desire to make nice, will he be accepting of an Iranian presence in Iraq? Among Senate Republicans, there is staunch opposition to Hill, and there may well be a filibuster. We join those opponents in hoping that the nomination is blocked. Still, foreign policy rests with the president: and what our country does in Iraq, and elsewhere, will be on Obama's head, as it was on his predecessor's.

■ You know what the Obamites say about their predecessors, the George W. Bushies: They were a bunch of diplomatic blunderers, when they were deigning to try diplomacy at all. By contrast, they, the Obamites, are all understanding and smoothness. Which brings us to Secretary of State Clinton's meeting with her Russian counterpart. She, President Obama, and Vice President Biden had been saying they wanted to "press the reset button" on U.S.-Russia relations. So she presented Foreign Minister Lavrov with a strange little device: a yellow box with a big red button. There was a Russian word on the button that was supposed to say "RESET." Instead it said "OVERCHARGE." Oops. For a time, the United States was the laughingstock of Russia. We all make mistakes, and this was not the worst thing in the world. But perhaps the Obama people could be a little more humble.

■ Our great friends the Saudis have a way of setting the highest standards in cruelty. In the city of Jeddah, an unmarried woman of 23 was abducted and gang-raped. Finding that she was then pregnant, she desperately tried to have an abortion. Brought to court, she explained what had happened, whereupon the judge ruled that she had committed adultery. Result: a sentence of one year in prison, and a hundred lashes once she has had the child. Meanwhile, over in another town, al-Chamli, two men called on a 75-year-old grandmother by the name of Khamisa Sawadi. One had once been breast-fed by this lady, and the other was delivering bread to her. But women are not allowed to be in the presence of men who are not family members. Result: Khamisa Sawadi is sentenced to forty lashes. Neither of these women is likely to survive being flogged. Nobody in or out of government here or anywhere, and certainly not the U.N. committee currently preparing for the Durban II conference on human rights, seems prepared to throw these outrages in the face of our great Saudi friends.

■ For years, people have feared that Pakistan is about to become a failed state. This latest crisis might indeed push it over the edge. What's happening is the kind of personalized test of strength that constitutes the political process in countries without meaningful democracy. Two power-hungry men, President Asif Ali Zardari and former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, are engaged in a no-holds-barred struggle. One apparently prime issue is the role of the chief justice, Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, a vital player suspended from office and

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in a position to affect the outcome of the power struggle. But, as always in conditions like these, force is decisive. Zardari placed Sharif under house arrest and rounded up hundreds of his supporters. Sharif countered by mobilizing his supporters for a march on the capital, Islamabad, to be followed by a mass sit-in. But suddenly the police supposed to be confining Sharif melted away, proving that Zardari could no longer count on having effective control. He has also had to acquiesce in the reinstatement of Chaudhry as chief justice. Sharif is proclaiming victory and revolution, but there might instead be a military coup, a spate of suicide bombers motivated by the Taliban or other Islamists, a last-gasp crackdown by Zardari, or some sort of anarchic free-for-all on the Afghan model. Anything and everything is possible.

■ Back in 1985 the Hanshin Tigers, a Japanese baseball team, won their first Central League championship in 21 years. In accordance with one of those incomprehensible Japanese traditions, ecstatic fans dressed as members of the winning team leapt from Osaka's Ebisubashi Bridge into the Dontonbori River. Alas, no one could be found who even faintly resembled the team's imported American power slugger, Randy Bass; so the fans took a statue of Colonel Sanders from a nearby KFC outlet and dropped it into the canal in lieu. The Tigers have not won a championship since, and the long dry spell has come to be taken as a curse imposed by the late colonel's shade for disrespect to his effigy. Now construction work on the canal has unearthed the colonel's statue (minus his left hand and spectacles). Tigers fans are fired up for a winning streak. So are superstitious speculators: The 1985 Tigers victory was followed by a five-year stock-market boom. Watch the Nikkei.

■ Our bathroom correspondent alerts us to the growing popularity in East Asia of the Modern Toilet restaurant chain. In a Modern Toilet franchise, patrons sit on a tastefully decorated bathroom pedestal (lid down), eat from a miniature model of the same fixture, drink from a small urinal, and select from desserts with names we'd rather not print. The light fixtures are shaped like . . . well, we'd prefer not to go into detail on that, either. "It's supposed to shock and confuse the senses," explains the chain's (or should that be "handle's"?) Taipei franchisee. We are sufficiently shocked and confused by the current economic ructions, thanks all the same, and would prefer not to have to confront novel conundrums like: Should hands be washed before the meal, or after?

■ Adidas has been marketing a hat showing the hammer and sickle. How do they sell you the hat? They say, "Show your love for the former USSR during training time." Yeah, feel the burn, show your love—for a brutal system that killed tens of millions and immiserated many more. Well, at least Adidas has given us something to wear with our Che shirts.

■ Through her 50 years on toy-store shelves, Barbie, the ectomorphic doll who goes Hollywood starlets one better by being made *entirely* of plastic, has been a vehicle for girls to act out their fantasies—and for adults to project their anxieties. Some grown-ups say her unrealistically slender proportions cause girls to be weight-obsessed, though they never say Weebles cause obesity, or Raggedy Ann bad fashion sense. It was once suggested that a pull-string Barbie who said "Math class is tough!" kept girls from mastering differential equations. Selling Barbies has actually been banned in Iran (not very surprising) and Montpelier, Vt. (even less so). Now a West Virginia legislator wants to add his state to the list. The bill's sponsor, Jeff Eldridge, is no brie-and-Chardonnay elitist, even by West Virginia standards; he grew up in a house with no plumbing and recently introduced a bill to legalize Ultimate Fighting Championship. Did his sister's Barbie kick his Hulk Hogan action figure in the groin when they were kids? No, but he wants to emphasize the importance of education and let girls know they can't get by on looks. That's good advice, but here's a better idea: School Choice Barbie, complete with fetching uniform.

■ Great hopes have been invested in President Obama, and those hopes can be a little creepy. There is a bumper sticker that says, "One Nation Under Obama." There is also one that says, "Obama Saves." Is that second sticker meant to be tongue in cheek? In any case, we heard a nice suggestion for a different sticker: "Jesus Saves. Obama Spends."

■ It's an age-old story: A law is passed; bureaucrats devise a blizzard of rules to enforce it; lawyers and judges widen their scope; and citizens end up shying away from anything even remotely questionable for fear of a lawsuit. A New York City real-estate brokerage recently sent employees a list of 200 words and phrases that are forbidden in its ads, lest these sound discriminatory. Among them: "family-friendly" (might discourage singles), "walking distance" (ditto for the handicapped, though "close proximity" is fine), and "professional" (the blue-collar). "Quiet" and "safe" are also banned, for some reason. The resulting dodges and circumlocutions are reminiscent of an 18th-century novel: "No smokers" is out, but "building has a no-smoking policy" is okay; naming the school district, a vastly important consideration in New York, is out, but customers may be directed to a website containing that information; and when buyers ask about the ethnic makeup of a building's tenants, the broker may only suggest that they stand outside the building and look. Thus do crusaders and do-gooders reduce grown men and women to communicating by nods, winks, hints, and code words.

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■ Ross Douthat, a former NR intern and our current film critic, was tapped to be an op-ed columnist for the *New York Times*. Douthat has done many other things than write for us in his 29 years—senior editor of *The Atlantic*, blogger on their website, author most recently (with Reihan Salam) of *Grand New Party: How Republicans Can Win the Working Class and Save the American Dream*. We wish him the best, we expect the best, and we note that, by joining former NR-nik David Brooks, he advances our project of osmotic hegemony (we need some work—David—on mission retention). N.B.: Douthat described himself as "sort of a squishy pro-lifer." That makes him a lot more pro-life than any other conservative employed by the Gray Lady.

■ Ron Silver had a splendid career on screen (*Reversal of Fortune*, *Enemies: A Love Story*), on stage (*Speed-the-Plow*), and on TV (*The West Wing*). Then 9/11 changed the world. Silver was a rare actor who recognized it, and his recognition changed his world. The work still came, but it was accompanied by ribbing and incomprehension, for Silver identified himself as a "9/11 Republican" and supported George W. Bush's reelection. "If we don't get this right," he said, meaning by *this* the War on Terror and, conversely, the terrorists' war on us, "all the other things don't matter worth a hill of beans." Silver saw that all civilized life and discourse, conservative and liberal, religious and skeptical, was challenged by death-loving jihadis. He wanted to put his fame and his talents on the side of survival. He was a liberal to the end, but a liberal who was willing to fight in self-defense. *Frater, ave atque vale*. Dead at 62. R.I.P.

■ Schuyler Chapin was many things in life: Jascha Heifetz's tour manager, head of the Metropolitan Opera, dean of the Columbia School of the Arts, and so on. He was also a friend of WFB. They attended the same school, the Millbrook School, in Dutchess County, N.Y. And WFB thought Chapin just about the best raconteur he ever heard. Once, the Buckleys and Chapin went on a cruise together, shortly after Chapin's wife died. (She was Betty Steinway, of the piano family. His second wife was the delightful Catia.) Bill, Pat, and Schuyler had endless meals together: breakfast, lunch, and dinner, day after day. And WFB marveled that Chapin never ran out of stories, or the ability to amuse and edify. He was an elegant man, an aristocrat with humility. He was sheerest pleasure to be around, as many of us can attest. He passed away on March 7, aged 86. How grateful we are to have known him! R.I.P.

■ Did NR, Inc., ever have a more cheerful employee than Jerry Garvey? Driver extraordinaire to Pat and Bill Buckley, various dogs, and countless human beings for over two decades, the retired New York City fireman had the *noive* needed to navigate a limo through Manhattan's brutal streets. His presence at NR's headquarters was always a loud and happy occasion (especially if his Mets or Jets had won), and his colleagues loved him for many reasons, not the least of which was that he treated all people equally and with decency. There wasn't an arrogant bone in his body. Retired and on vacation in Florida, he died—dropped dead, as he would matter-of-factly say it—on February 27, a year to the day that WFB passed away. Too sudden, too soon, he leaves his beloved wife Eleanor, his four children, and many friends here, in offices now quieter and less cheerful. R.I.P.

THE ECONOMY

Signs of Life

Has spring arrived? Stocks, especially bank stocks, are up. The velocity of money, which dropped calamitously during the financial panic of the fall, continues to pick up. The Fed's loose money is having its expected stimulative effect on the yield curve (even if it is also storing up some future trouble). There has even been a rare outbreak of good sense in liberal-run Washington. Fed chairman Ben Bernanke, House Financial Services Committee chairman Barney Frank, and Democratic economic guru Warren Buffett have all endorsed the relaxation of a particularly onerous regulation of the financial industry.

The problem is the interaction of new "mark to market" accounting rules with capital-adequacy standards. Those rules, adopted in 2007, can be expected to have perverse effects in both booms and busts. During booms, overvalued assets exaggerate financial companies' capital cushion and thus allow them to lend too freely. During busts the devaluation of assets leads to a downward spiral in which fire sales are needed to meet capital standards, driving prices downward for the next company—which then has to sell assets to meet its capital requirements. The rethinking of this policy in Washington is long overdue.

Pollyanna is not writing this editorial. Even if the economy has hit bottom, there will be pain for months to come. Unemployment is a lagging indicator. Nor do we know for sure that a recovery will soon be under way. Washington is easily distracted by populist gales and its own obsessions. Tim Geithner walks the halls of a Treasury empty of both money and personnel. The administration shows no particular urgency about devising a solution to the problem of banks' toxic assets. It is much more zealous about planning to divide the proceeds of the fantastically strong recovery it simply assumes will take place.

The rest of the government should make a virtue of Obama's dithering. Either Congress or the regulatory agencies have it within their power to implement mark-to-market reform quickly. That reform may detoxify some assets and make it possible for banks to work down others over time. The financial industry's remaining problems would be more manageable—perhaps sufficiently so that the administration will finally devise a plan for them. And by then, we may have seen a few more green shoots come up.

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Diplomacy by Bumper Sticker

The Obama administration should reset its Russia policy

BY JOHN R. BOLTON

Less than two months after his inauguration, President Obama's Russia policy has gone badly awry. His errors bode poorly for important American interests challenged by Russia, but there are broader implications as well. Many of the Obama administration's misperceptions and mistakes in the Russian arena reflect pervasive flaws throughout its foreign policy.

The administration's biggest mistake to date was suggesting that U.S. missile-defense sites in Poland and the Czech Republic might go unbuilt if Russia could deliver an Iran without nuclear weapons. While the letter containing this trial balloon is not public, and both Moscow and Washington deny that it contained an explicit quid pro quo, media descriptions of its contents were revealing enough, and far from novel. Democrats have never felt comfortable with missile defense because it violates their Cold War precept that defense is destabilizing and vulnerability is good, an opinion central to their flawed approach to national security.

The proposed tradeoff harmed U.S. interests in three respects:

First, by showing, at best, ambivalence on national missile defense, President Obama signaled that the issue was in the souk and the bidding open. Russia now knows that missile defense is up for grabs. This is completely opposite to the strategy of Ronald Reagan, who refused to offer his Strategic Defense Initiative as a bargaining chip, thus driving the Soviet Union to despair and significantly contributing to its eventual destruction.

Second, missile defense is not just about Iran, but about other threats from that region, and elsewhere, such as North Korea. Pakistan already has many nuclear weapons that, in the hands of a radical Islamist regime, would be a grave peril for the United States and its friends. New radical regimes in this region, the world's most volatile, could come to power and acquire nuclear weapons, posing a significant threat. If Obama believes Iran is the only nuclear-proliferation problem, he and his team are seriously misinformed.

Third, this kind of proposal could easily degenerate from what sounds initially like tough-minded realpolitik to diplomatic fecklessness. Especially in this administration's hands, the actual result could well be that the United States gives up the Polish and Czech sites while Russia not only doesn't deliver a nuclear-free Iran but doesn't even try very hard. Thus, what starts out as a bad deal could easily end up being a catastrophic deal.

These errors reflect an Obama-administration diplomacy that will rely on promises from countries that have no intentions of carrying them out, an "innocents abroad" policy that will hearten our adversaries and appall our friends.

Then there is the famous "reset button" for relations with Russia. Embarrassing here is not the mistranslation on the cute little button Secretary of State Clinton presented to Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov at their March 6 meeting in Geneva, but the simpleminded intellectual basis underlying the very idea of "pressing the reset button." Foreign policy by bumper-sticker slogan is hardly reassuring—but it is entirely consistent with the new administration's endless-campaign mindset.

It is painful to have to recite the obvious, but one side cannot unilaterally reset a bilateral relationship without simply giving in to the other side's positions. Even worse, the Obama administration seems to believe that difficulties in U.S.-Russian relations stem from attitudes and actions on *our* side, particularly the Bush administration's manner and

Mr. Bolton, a former U.S. representative to the U.N., is a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute.

ROMAN GENN

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Dr. Robert Bucholz, D.Phil., is Associate Professor of History at Loyola University of Chicago. He received his undergraduate education in history at Cornell University and his doctorate in modern history from Oxford University.

Professor Bucholz has received several awards for his teaching, including the Sujack Award for Teaching Excellence, the highest such award presented by the Loyola College of Arts and Sciences, and the Honors Program Faculty Member of the Year Award in both 1998 and 1999.

He is the author or coauthor of three books, including *The Augustan Court: Queen Anne and the Decline of Court Culture*.

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Napoleon Bonaparte on the battlefield.

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methods. Thus, in the Obama view, the problems can now be essentially eliminated simply because administrations have changed. This paradigm in Obama's Russia policy epitomizes the broader policy theme that Bush's "attitude" caused so many of our present difficulties in the world. The administration, in the glow of global Obamamania, believes that simply bringing a changed attitude will help realign fundamental international realities.

This position is not only erroneous, but dangerous. Nonetheless, repeated comments by Secretary Clinton during her recent Middle East/Europe tour demonstrate that it is manifestly the administration's view. On March 6, referring to Condoleezza Rice, an NPR reporter observed in the media's typically unbiased fashion that, "as you know, your predecessor had quite a testy relationship with [Foreign Minister Lavrov]." Said Clinton, obviously happy for the cue line: "We're going to hit the reset button and start fresh." In an interview with a Turkish journalist the next day, Clinton said:

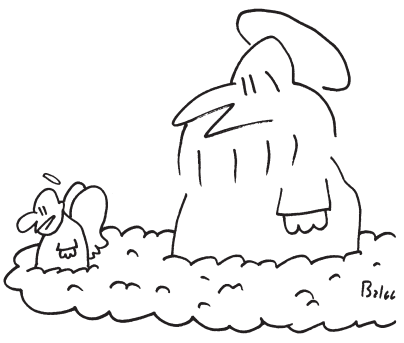
> I know right now that the Turkish people are somewhat negative about America, I would argue, because of some of the decisions of the last eight years. I remember very well when my husband and I were here in '99. The Turkish people were very positive about America. That's what we want again.

It is hardly "diplomatic" for an administration to take shots at its predecessor overseas while ignoring the negative impact on Turkish perceptions of America that increasing Islamicization of Turkish politics is likely to have. In the Obama view, however, it is all Bush administration, all the time.

In a March 5 BBC interview, Clinton was even more explicit, saying, "I think there was a rather confrontational approach toward Russia in the prior administration. How much that contributed to Russian behavior, I think, is a legitimate question to ask." This is not quite blaming terrorist attacks on "confrontational" behavior by the targets, but it has the same odor, implying that Russia's belligerent behavior is America's fault. If so, Secretary Clinton might be more careful in her own remarks. On March 4, at a West Bank school, she called Sally Ride the first woman in space, when in fact it was the USSR's Valentina Tereshkova.

As we should all know, it takes two to have a testy or confrontational relationship. If Rice's relationship with Lavrov was testy, it was because of Russia's protecting Iran's nuclear-weapons program, Russia's invasion of Georgia, and Russia's threats to cut off oil and natural gas to Western Europe. Clinton may be glowing that Lavrov said the two of them "have a wonderful personal relationship" after their dinner in Geneva. But that wonderful relationship did not prevent Lavrov, at the press conference immediately afterwards, from standing defiantly behind Russia's sale of the advanced S-300 air-defense system to Iran. Nor had he missed the chance earlier to say flatly in public "You got it wrong" when Clinton asked whether the Russian translation of the word "reset" was correct. No diplomatic obfuscation there, but a shiv straight in Clinton's ribs. I have no doubt Lavrov thought that was really wonderful, too. Perhaps Secretary Clinton missed it.

U.S. relations with Russia in the next four years will be difficult because of Russian belligerence and assertiveness, not because Rice and Lavrov, or their respective bosses, didn't each think the other was wonderful. Believing that less-than-ideal relations between Washington and Moscow stemmed from Washington's "confrontational" approach shows an unprecedented bias toward the other side of the negotiating table in our own top negotiators. A weak knowledge of history, a lack of strategy and perspective, and a domestic political agenda of revanchism have so far characterized the Obama administration's relations not only with Russia, but with much of the broader world as well. Without a dramatic improvement, and soon, there is trouble ahead. **NR**



"I was afraid of this—the evolution protocols are just confusing *them."*

University Aid

It is education bureaucrats, not students, who will profit from the president's proposals

BY JOHN HOOD

America's higher-education lobby has enjoyed spectacular success over the past three decades. By zealously marketing their degrees as indispensable to employment and a ticket to personal fulfillment, universities have convinced millions of mediocre students to enroll, spend gobs of (mostly) other people's money, and then fail their way off the campus to make room for warm bodies. In a cycle as regular as the tides, administrators first raise tuition, then go before state legislatures and Congress complaining about rising tuition, seeking more subsidies purportedly to benefit their cash-strapped customers. At the same time, universities have vastly expanded business enterprises on their campuses, such as hospitals and sports teams, that often boost their immediate cash flow and always boost their sales pitches to wealthy donors and powerful politicians.

Nice work if you can get it. And with Barack Obama in the White House, universities will be getting a lot more. Conservatives need to understand both the details of his proposed largesse and the political circumstances in which he proposes it. And they need to craft alternative policies that, rather than simply obstruct, put Obama and the Left on the defensive.

In his first address to Congress, President Obama called it every American's patriotic duty to enroll in post-secondary education, repeating the thesis, long discredited by careful research, that maximizing university attendance creates large economic benefits. "That," the president said, "is why we will provide the support necessary for you to complete college and meet a new goal: By 2020, America will

Mr. Hood is chairman and president of the John Locke Foundation, a think tank in North Carolina, and a board member of the Pope Center for Higher Education Policy.

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once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world."

While challenging young people to achieve their potential is praiseworthy, the president is mistaken on two important points. First, the goal of leading the world in college graduation is neither achievable (because of our demographics) nor particularly worthwhile. Far greater economic and social benefits would accrue from boosting high-school graduation and encouraging hands-on vocational and technical training. Second, spending tens of billions of additional federal dollars on grants, loans, and tax credits is unlikely to boost college graduation much anyway—though it may well boost attendance, and thus revenue for the colleges.

The Obama administration is certainly committed to the spending part. The president's stimulus monstrosity raised the maximum Pell Grant by $500 (to $5,350) and expanded eligibility. It provided massive bailouts to state governments, allowing them to mitigate funding cuts to public colleges and universities in the midst of budget deficits, and even more massively expanded federal spending on scientific research, which will largely flow to campuses. The bill expanded federal work-study and loan-guarantee programs. And it transformed a nonrefundable $1,800 tax credit (the Clinton-created Hope Scholarship) into a $2,500 tax credit that is now partially refundable (the American Opportunity Tax Credit). Next came the outline of Obama's proposed budget, which would further boost research subsidies and eliminate longstanding federal guarantees for private lending in exchange for a federal-government monopoly over student loans.

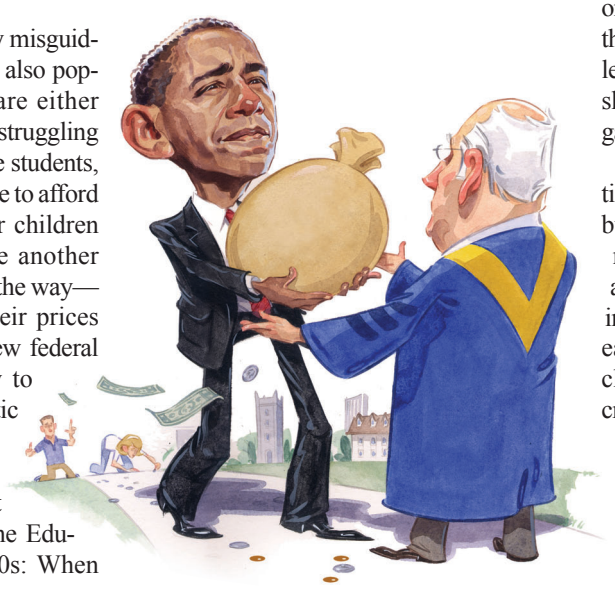
Much of this agenda is deeply misguided. Unfortunately, much of it is also popular. Millions of Americans are either saddled with big student debts, struggling to pay tuition for current college students, or worried that they won't be able to afford the tuition when their younger children grow up. Many will welcome another political promise that help is on the way—but when universities raise their prices again to capture most of the new federal aid, these voters won't know to blame Obama and the Democratic Congress.

The basic problem here has been well understood since at least Bill Bennett's tenure at the Education Department in the 1980s: When Washington or the states expand government aid, they make parents and students less sensitive to price. The dynamic is similar to the third-party-payment problem in health care. If it looks like someone else is footing the bill, customers are less likely to go without or shop around for a better deal.

The result is that as subsidies rise, most of the benefit goes to universities and their employees, in the form of higher tuition and fees. Some students may end up going to college who previously could not, but most will be unprepared for college-level work. Even after extensive remediation during their freshman and sophomore years, many will either drop out—the six-year graduation rate is less than 60 percent—or further depress academic standards as the faculty inflates grades to keep them enrolled and happily filling out laudatory course reviews.

So simply shoveling additional taxpayer dollars into universities doesn't significantly increase the nation's human capital. It just redistributes money from the general public to affluent professors and residents of college towns. Fiscal conservatives are right to object.

At the same time, conservatives need to grapple with another insight: Because college is essentially an investment, college expenses should be tax-deductible to some degree, for the same reason that IRAs and 401(k)s are and should be tax-deductible. If the government taxes your income before you have a chance to invest it, it lowers the return you make on the investment. If it then taxes whatever return you do make, it has charged you a higher effective tax rate than it would have if you'd simply spent the money—thus favoring consumption over investment. People respond by spending instead of investing, denuding the capital stock of the economy and inhibiting long-term growth.



DARREN GYGI

Educating your children certainly can be an excellent investment, increasing their future (taxable) income. But successful investing depends on the freedom to choose among competing options and to reap the consequences of your choices. The Left has adopted the language of investment to market its latest spending binge while refusing actually to treat education as an investment by enacting policies that will encourage real growth and progress. Instead of simply saying no to Obama's agenda, conservatives should retort: "Absolutely, we should help American families invest in their children's education. But why are you being so unfair and stingy about it?"

Specifically, conservatives should offer a counterplan with three elements:

First, in lieu of modestly increasing the higher-education tax credit, we should propose a universal tax credit for deposits into Coverdell educational-savings accounts (ESAs) and 529 plans, both of which currently allow people to save money for college expenses tax-free. We should then suggest that families be given wide latitude in using these funds: for college tuition and fees, textbooks, educational technology, tutoring, and home- and private-school expenses.

There is some useful precedent. Coverdell ESAs already allow some K–12 expenses. In addition, embedded within the stimulus bill is a temporary provision allowing parents to spend their 529 dollars on computers for educational use even if their children are not yet enrolled in college. The provision expires in 2011. Why should it? Parents will love the idea of gaining more access to their own funds.

Expanding federal tax relief for educational savings has several advantages. It builds on an existing structure used by millions of Americans. Some states already offer tax deductions for deposits into 529 accounts, so legislatures could easily transform them into true parent choice. And focusing deductions and credits on educational savings rather than same-year educational expenditures would help break up the tuition-cost spiral by giving families the *same tax benefit* even if they shop around for lower tuitions and fees. Those who

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choose schools that charge lower tuition should be able to accumulate their unspent funds, tax free, for future educational needs—or even for retirement, though in the latter case the withdrawals ought to be taxable.

Second, instead of modestly expanding the current Pell Grant program, we should propose devolving it to the states and sending the money directly to needy students rather than to institutions. As Ohio University's Richard Vedder has argued, letting universities collect and distribute Pell Grants gives them at least some ability to game the system by shifting their institutional aid away from need-based scholarships and toward merit-based awards designed to attract the superstar students who boost schools' national rankings.

Vedder suggests sending Pell funds to qualified students in the form of debit cards for approved expenses. That would turn them into true means-tested vouchers for higher education. We should also ignore tuition in determining students' Pell Grant amounts; more of the help would then go to the most disadvantaged students, who typically attend community colleges rather than Ivy League schools. And since going to an expensive school would no longer get students and parents more government cash, we would create another incentive for them to shop around.

Third, instead of embracing Obama's federal takeover of student lending, we should endorse his call for an end to federal guarantees for student loans—and leave it at that. Loan guarantees for education create the same problems that currently bedevil the mortgage-lending industry. Unlike on-budget cash grants or tax breaks, they hide the fiscal risks to taxpayers while creating harmful distortions in the market. In their absence, families would have to make more judicious use of debt, particularly if their children want to pursue degrees in the humanities or social sciences that may have personal value but not a lot of financial payoff.

Rather than yield the field to the Obama administration and the Left, conservatives can offer assistance to these families without violating limited-government principles. We should seize this opportunity to make the case that parents know best how and when to invest in their children's education, and that their options should not be artificially constrained by bureaucrats, unions, and Washington politicians. NR

Bush's India Triumph

An overlooked achievement

BY DUNCAN CURRIE

SHORTLY before George W. Bush left office, Harvard historian Sugata Bose told me that strengthening U.S. relations with India "may turn out to be the most significant foreign-policy achievement of the Bush administration." It is an achievement that Indians greatly appreciate: In mid-February, a spokesman for the ruling Congress party said that Bush deserves India's top civilian award, the Bharat Ratna ("Jewel of India"), an honor rarely conferred on non-Indians.

"The people of India deeply love you," Prime Minister Manmohan Singh told Bush last September. In the 2008 Pew Global Attitudes survey, India was one of only three countries out of 24 in which a majority of respondents expressed "a lot" or "some" confidence in Bush to "do the right thing regarding foreign affairs." (The others were Tanzania and Nigeria.)

Unfortunately, Indian officials have notably less confidence in Barack Obama than they had in Bush. And so far, Obama has done little to assuage their worries. "There's no question that the Indians are uncertain about this administration," says a Democratic Senate aide who works on foreign-policy issues. "They had such a good relationship with Bush, and [Obama] ran as the anti-Bush." Since Obama's election, an accumulation of perceived slights—some more trivial than others—has intensified New Delhi's anxiety and fostered an atmosphere of "deteriorating trust."

The most historic element of Bush's India policy was a bilateral civilian nuclear agreement, which received final approval from U.S. lawmakers in the fall of 2008. Last June, when the agreement was stalled, an Obama adviser told the *Financial Times* that his candidate was "highly ambivalent" about it, even though Obama had backed the nuclear deal in a 2006 Senate vote. A month later, Obama told an Indian magazine that despite his initial concerns over how the nuclear pact would affect the global nonproliferation regime, he supported it because "India is a strong democracy and a natural strategic partner for the U.S. in the 21st century."

Yet Indians still had their doubts about Obama. They knew he had sought to modify the nuclear accord in 2006 to limit India's access to nuclear fuel. Indian foreign-affairs scholar C. Raja Mohan has written that Obama's proposed amendment "almost wrecked the nuclear deal." Daniel Twining, who worked on South Asia policy at the State Department in 2007 and 2008, says it was a "poison-pill amendment."

Though the International Atomic Energy Agency, the Nuclear Suppliers Group, and the U.S. and Indian governments have taken the necessary steps to permit bilateral civilian nuclear cooperation, policymakers must negotiate key aspects of that cooperation. Obama has tapped veteran State Department hand Robert Einhorn to be the senior arms-control official at Foggy Bottom. Einhorn has been a sharp critic of the U.S.-India nuclear agreement. In November 2006, he was one of 18 signatories to a letter urging the Senate to "address serious flaws" in its India nuclear-trade bill.

On the other hand, Joe Biden is highly regarded in India. Hillary Clinton is also well liked, partly due to her husband's popularity—his five-day trip to India in 2000 generated enormous good will—but also thanks to her own efforts. During her time in the Senate, Hillary co-chaired the India Caucus, promoted a more robust U.S.-India partnership, and established close links with the Indian-American community. At a May 2005 dinner celebrating Sikh-American heritage, she facetiously labeled herself "the senator from Punjab."

But on her recent tour of Asia—her first foreign trip as secretary of state—Hillary did not visit India. Needless to say, the Indians noticed that her itinerary included Tokyo, Jakarta, Seoul, and Beijing, but not New Delhi. They were also miffed that after his election, Obama called a litany of other world leaders (including the president of Pakistan) before dialing Singh. And as Twining points out, the page on the White House website that outlines Obama's foreign-policy agenda fails to mention India.

Some of this may seem like small beer, but it has heightened India's qualms about

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Obama. Indian officials fear that their country is not a top priority for the new administration, and that Obama is less committed to the bilateral partnership than Bush was. In fairness to Obama, Bush devoted an extraordinary amount of political energy to India, and he may have created unrealistic expectations. "The Bush administration did so much to move the relationship forward," says Twining. "You could make a case that George Bush was actually the India desk officer."

Obama has hardly neglected South Asia, but India has not been his chief focus. "As things stand," writes Xenia Dormandy, former South Asia director at the National Security Council, in the *Christian Science Monitor*, "Washington's bandwidth for India seems to be overwhelmed by concerns about its neighbors to the west, Afghanistan and Pakistan." Obama has authorized a formal review of U.S. policy toward those two countries—in addition to green-lighting a big troop increase in Afghanistan—and has made Richard Holbrooke a special envoy to the region.

When Holbrooke's appointment was first announced, the Indians thought it might signal a new U.S. push to broker a settlement over Kashmir. India ardently opposes such foreign interference in the Kashmir dispute. In an online column posted on January 23, Laura Rozen of *Foreign Policy* reported that "India vigorously—and successfully—lobbied the Obama transition team to make sure that neither India nor Kashmir was included in Holbrooke's official brief."

Twining argues that "significant parts of the U.S. establishment have gone back to a Pakistan-centric South Asia policy." On Afghanistan, Indian officials hope that the U.S. policy review produces an unambiguous, long-term American security commitment. They are worried that short-term "peace" deals with the Taliban will embolden radical elements in Pakistan.

Amid a global economic crisis, the Indians are also concerned about Obama's stance on trade. Obama has repeatedly bashed "companies that ship jobs overseas." Economist Jagdish Bhagwati, a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, says that India will "surely" retaliate against the "Buy American" provision in the economic-stimulus package. Meanwhile, India is nervous that the Obama administration will pressure it to join the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, which President Clinton signed in 1996 and the Senate rejected in 1999.

Though Obama is off to a shaky start with India, his presidency is barely two months old. "With a little effort on the part of the Obama administration, a lot of these uncertainties and doubts about his commitment to the relationship can fall away," says the Democratic Senate aide. "The president should also think about going to New Delhi, sooner rather than later." Secretary of State Clinton had a positive meeting with her Indian counterpart in mid-March, and New Delhi knows that she and Biden were solid advocates of India in the Senate. Moreover, pro-India sentiments run deep among both Republicans and Democrats.

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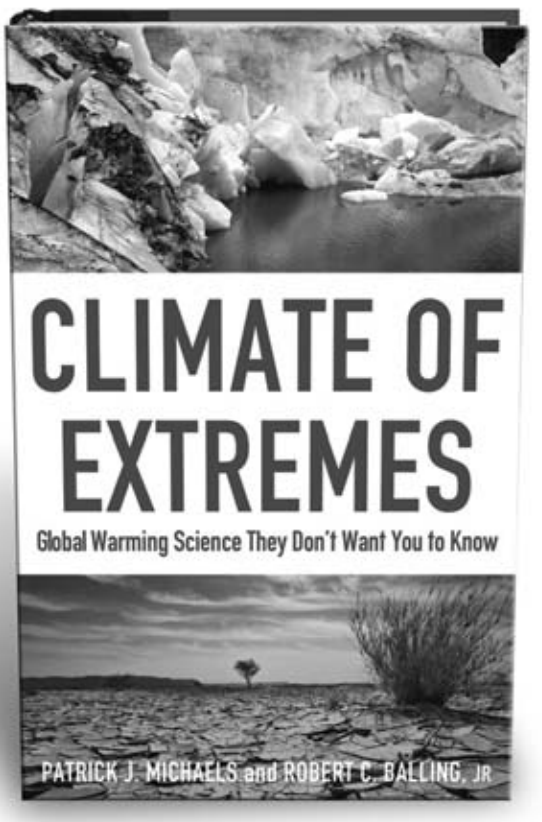

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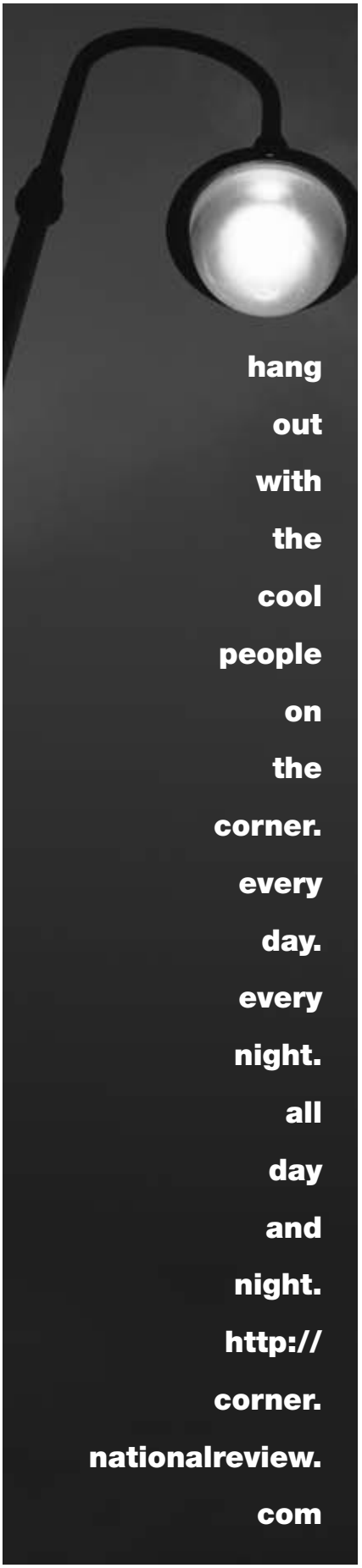

It's easy to see why. The U.S. and India share a host of values and interests. Both are wary of China, and both are fighting Islamist terrorism that emanates from Pakistan. The Indian diaspora has bolstered cultural linkages, and in recent years bilateral economic cooperation has flourished. Stephen Cohen, a South Asia specialist at the Brookings Institution, reckons that U.S.-India economic connections are "so strong that they stabilize the overall relationship."

This does not mean that the relationship will always be harmonious. For example: India enjoys relatively warm ties with Burma and Iran (though also with Israel), and it has clung to steep agricultural tariffs, which helped scuttle the Doha trade talks last summer. Nevertheless, there are major structural forces pushing the U.S. and India closer together. In June 2005, U.S. and Indian officials signed a joint defense framework that stated, "As the world's two largest democracies, the United States and India agree on the vital importance of political and economic freedom, democratic institutions, the rule of law, security, and opportunity around the world. The leaders of our two countries are building a U.S.-India strategic partnership in pursuit of these principles and interests."

Bush's India outreach was part of a broader Asia strategy that involved engaging China while boosting relations with democratic powers such as India, Japan, and Australia. The latter three countries conducted a joint relief mission with the U.S. following the 2004 Asian tsunami. In 2007, these four democracies (along with Singapore) held multilateral naval exercises.

In the decades ahead, India's global clout will increase considerably. Goldman Sachs has projected that India could have a larger economy than the United States by 2050. At that point, the South Asian giant will have eclipsed China to become the most populous country on earth, according to the United Nations Population Fund.

In his 2008 book *Rivals*, former *Economist* editor (and fierce Bush critic) Bill Emmott writes that Bush's "bold initiative" to enhance U.S.-India relations "may eventually be judged by historians as a move of great strategic importance and imagination." Obama now has an opportunity to build on that initiative. He should seize it. **NR**

Eastern Exposure

The economic downturn will be much worse for China than for America

BY GORDON G. CHANG

Wen Jiabao was confident, even smug, at the World Economic Forum in Davos this year. The Chinese premier relished criticizing America's "unsustainable model of development" and touting his own country's prospects. He was not alone in his views. The dominant narrative about the global economic crisis is that it will hasten American decline and accelerate Chinese ascendancy; some now speak of a "Beijing consensus." This view is mistaken, and the opposite is more likely to be true: No national economy is more vulnerable in the current crisis than China's.

The crisis will be especially deep and unusually long. We experienced a bubble of immense proportions, and excess capacity is now being closed down. The process of eliminating excess capacity—the precondition for recovery—will probably not be complete until global imbalances are unwound. The two most important of them are the Chinese current-account surplus and the American current-account deficit. The fastest path to global prosperity is for American manufacturers and farmers, who still retain competitive advantages in crucial sectors, to sell to China, thereby reducing in one stroke both imbalances. Given the size of the American and Chinese economies—together they account for about 31 percent of global output—there is little prospect for worldwide recovery until these two countries establish a more sustainable trading relationship. Since late July, however, the Chinese central government has been taking a new series of actions to wall off its domestic market from foreign products.

Mr. Chang is the author of Nuclear Showdown: North Korea Takes On the World. *He lived and worked in China and Hong Kong for almost two decades.*

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Other nations, taking their cue from China, are also trying to cope with the global crisis with policies that will ultimately depress trade, a crucial engine of economic growth. Governments have been adopting stimulus packages and other measures that favor domestic producers and, as a result, run afoul of either the spirit or the letter of World Trade Organization rules. Many nations, especially in Asia, have been actively depressing their currencies to make exports cheaper. In the 1930s, tariff walls deepened the Great Depression and prolonged it. This time, more subtle but equally destructive measures look like they will produce the same effect. According to the usually sunny World Bank, this year global trade will fall the most in 80 years. Globalization, which looked inevitable just a few months ago, is going into reverse. As this happens, the global economy will contract this year the most since the Great Depression.

The downturn rocking America is shaking China as well. True, the Chinese appear well positioned. For one thing, Beijing is still running large current-account surpluses. Over time, those surpluses have resulted in what has been called "the greatest fortune ever assembled," China's record-breaking foreign-exchange reserves. The reserves, now standing at $1.95 trillion, provide a cushion. Yet that cushion is not much use at home under deteriorating economic conditions. Moreover, the outsized reserves are a symptom of underlying vulnerability. As we saw 80 years ago, it is current-account-surplus countries that have the hardest time adjusting to deteriorating economic conditions. Why? Because they depend on exports to keep their factories running, and as trade declines their economies suffer. China today is extraordinarily dependent on exports—about 38 percent of its gross domestic product is attributable to sales of manufactured goods and agricultural products to customers abroad. And now we are seeing the pattern of the Great Depression repeat itself with China: Despite a series of central-government measures to support exports, sales abroad slumped a greater-than-expected 17.5 percent in January and 25.7 last month.

Because exports are shrinking, the overall economy is contracting. Although Beijing reported 6.8 percent growth for the last quarter, that number tells us little about the actual performance of the Chinese economy. China's quarterly growth numbers are reported on a year-on-year basis; this method tends to mask declines in growth when they first occur. If China reported quarterly GDP like most other nations—showing changes in economic output from one quarter to the next—growth would have been 1 or 2 percent, if there had been any growth at all. It appears, from most indicators, that the economy actually shrank in December.

Whatever output was last quarter, it certainly is in steep decline now. According to official statistics, China's gross domestic product skyrocketed a staggering 13.0 percent in 2007, and it was, in all probability, higher than that—poor sampling procedures did not

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properly take into account the output of small manufacturers, then the most productive part of the economy. Now, however, small manufacturers are suffering more than other producers, so current statistics do not reflect the real drop-off. When other distortions in the statistics—some the result of fakery—are taken into account, it's clear no major economy is falling faster than China's at this moment.

Due to the alarming dive, the greatest mass migration in history—Chinese peasants leaving inland farms to work in coastal factories—is going into reverse, as there is no work for tens of millions of citizens for the first time in decades. The country has been plagued by strikes, protests, and insurrections for more than half a year, but especially since October, and Beijing has been bracing itself for a new round of disturbances in the coming months. "The crisis in the West is purely economic," said labor-rights activist Li Qiang in January. "But in China it's a huge political problem." Very few citizens—even party members—truly believe in the stated ideals of the Communist party anymore, so its primary basis of legitimacy is the continued delivery of prosperity.

Declining popular support at a time of increasing societal stress threatens social stability. How unstable is the country? A few months ago, the most popular man in China was a drifter who had entered a police compound in Shanghai and killed six officers while wounding four others on July 1, the anniversary of the founding of the Communist party. Outside his trial, middle-class Chinese, the beneficiaries of three decades of reform, chanted "Long live the killer!" and "Down with the Communist party!"

The political turmoil gives new urgency to the country's economic-recovery planning. Its programs, however, are unlikely to have much of an effect. Beijing's preference for boosting exports is unrealistic given declining global demand, and its stimulus plan, announced in November, is not designed to accomplish the only thing that can provide sustainable growth: increasing consumer spending. In fact, by emphasizing the building of heavy infrastructure and pouring funds into local governments and state enterprises, the stimulus program will undermine the most vibrant part of the Chinese economy: the private sector, which has been responsible for most of the country's growth in the last 30 years.

We should not be surprised that the state's plan is designed to strengthen the state economy. China's grand experiment in grafting a free-market branch onto its socialist roots has just about reached the limit of what it can achieve inside the present authoritarian system. In the last three years, Chinese leaders have shunned further structural economic reform because such changes would threaten the power of the Communist party. A true market economy requires the rule of law, which in turn requires institutional curbs on government. Because these two limitations on power are incompatible with the party's ambitions to continue to dominate society, China cannot make much progress toward them while maintaining its current political system.

When it had the opportunity to change the basis of the economy, Beijing squandered it. Instead, technocrats prized fast growth above all, and their policies brought other problems, such as bad bank loans, unfunded social-welfare obligations, a degraded environment, and rampant corruption. These difficulties did not pose serious threats, because increases in economic output in past years have tended to mask them. But as the economy begins to contract, the dislocations are becoming too big to ignore and probably too big to solve, especially in a severe—and long-lasting—global downturn.

Chinese citizens and businesses sense this: They evaded Beijing's strict currency controls and smuggled $126 billion out of China last quarter. Another estimate, using a broader definition of "hot money," put the figure as high as $240 billion for the same period.

And what about the world's biggest economy? The United States, as a current-account-deficit country, can recover on its own, as it is now doing by consuming less—imports are dropping faster than at any other time since 1942—and by saving more. As Americans save more, the need for external funding of the federal government is decreasing. If Washington doesn't get in their way, efficient and productive Americans will eventually be able to work themselves out of this crisis.

The United States—inventive, resilient, and flexible—has a unique ability to renew itself, the greatest of its many strengths. The first nation into the downturn, it looks set to be the first to emerge from it, because it is making internal adjustments. In contrast, China does not have the power to solve its problems. As a practical matter, it relies on foreign customers, but its export-boosting measures are bound to trigger protectionism. The Chinese, therefore, could end up becoming the biggest victims of their own mercantilist policies.

Of course, China has appeared strong during a benign period of almost two decades of uninterrupted prosperity and globalization. Now, however, even the initial stages of the downturn are exposing the inherent weaknesses of its economic system and the fragility of its political institutions. China has the world's most severely slowing economy, and unless there is a broad-based and robust global recovery this year—most unlikely—it will be heading toward a new period of prolonged turbulence. Wen may be a little less smug the next time he's in Davos. **NR**

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Mon/July 13	Santorini, Greece	8AM-9PM	
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Black and White and Dead All Over

The decline of newspapers—and what it portends for conservatives

BY JAMES V. DELONG

THE American Society of Newspaper Editors canceled its April convention, explaining that "the challenges editors face at their newspapers demand their full attention."

It seems likely that the event would have proven gloomy. One imagines wooden carts creaking down hotel hallways while hooded figures call "Bring out your dead," like a scene from the 14th century. But the plague spared 60 to 70 percent of Europe's population; newspapers would be grateful for that survival rate.

As does much of history, the plague looks different when taken in perspective, which is another way of saying "as long as you weren't stuck in the middle of it." It changed the terms of trade between labor and land, broke up old social structures, and enhanced human mobility both geographically and socially, helping to clear the ground for the great leaps of subsequent centuries.

So conservatives, frustrated by the *dirigiste* liberal bias of the mainstream media, should approach print journalism's disintegration in the spirit of Rahm Emanuel—"You never want a serious crisis to go to waste"—focusing on how to fashion a vibrant, open, and diverse *news* business out of the wreckage of the old *newspaper* business.

More than 1,400 dailies are printed in the U.S., but it is useful to recognize that, to a large extent, this is a single large enterprise with 1,400 local franchises—McNews. Printing and distributing a newspaper requires heavy initial capital investment but has low marginal costs. This creates high returns to scale, a recipe for market power, but the product is heavy and must be distributed by truck, which normally limits that market power to a metropolitan area. Most localities have one paper, and only the very largest have more than two.

The newsgathering end of the business is also subject to economies of scale and market power: Individual papers pooled resources to create the wire services, notably the Associated Press. In theory, and often in fact, this model allows a single reporter to cover a government agency or a major news event for the entire universe of papers. The AP is a cooperative owned by the daily newspapers, but its subscribers include TV stations, radio stations, and Internet news organizations. Its internal finances, and the fees paid by individual papers, are a mystery, since the public's right to know stops at the AP's door.

McNews is the product of this consolidation of non-local news. Having to compete only with television, each newspaper had a pretty solid grip on its readers' access to the newsgathering apparatus. It had an even stronger grip on the reverse: the ability of newsmakers to reach the general public. Individual papers apply their own selection processes to the swirling stream of raw material; part of the value of this model is that each newspaper is not just an aggregator of news but also a filter, telling its readers: "We have scanned the universe, and here is what you need to know today to be informed." If this job is done well, it pushes other sources of information to the margins.

But that market power was also the industry's undoing. It is a truth universally acknowledged that any organization that escapes the discipline of the market—university, foundation, government agency, industrial enterprise—gets captured, inch by inch, by its staffers, and its market power is then turned to their benefit, which may take the form of money, ease, ideological satisfaction, or all three.

So it was with McNews. Pay went up, and parroting some alpha source such as the *New York Times* greatly reduced the demands and stress of the job. For many, journalism was not just a job but a chance to make a difference—meaning, in most cases, a chance to promote the vague ideology of state power exercised in the interests of the victim du jour. For an explanation of why this mindset came to dominate the once-honorable blue-collar trade of newspapering, you might ask a cultural anthropologist—but the same ideology dominates universities, foundations, and government, so the answer would probably be denial.

Such comfortable and profitable arrangements are not destined to endure. The Internet is demolishing this structure.

Contrary to popular impressions, newspaper circulation has held up pretty well in absolute terms, though it has not kept up with population growth. It was 63.3 million in 1984 and 51 million in 2007, but that number really reflects the near extinction of afternoon newspapers. Morning papers' circulation actually increased from 35.7 million in 1984 to a peak of 46.8 million in 2001, and was at 44.5 million in 2007.

But the economic basis of this enterprise is collecting eyeballs to rent to advertisers. In 2005, 54 million daily readers paid $11 billion out of pocket for their newspapers in the form of subscriptions and single-copy sales. Most of the industry's revenue, $44.7 billion, came from print advertising: $17.3 billion in classified, $22.2 billion in retail, and $7.9 billion from national accounts. Online ads produced $2 billion.

The Internet is taking a big bite out of those billions. Classified ads in particular are spectacularly inefficient: printing thousands of copies and driving them around in trucks, in the hope of reaching the relatively few readers who might be interested. And given that classifieds are themselves useful information, they can be published on the Internet independent of news reporting. As classifieds were hugely profitable—at one time providing 30 percent of all newspaper revenue—their decline has been catastrophic for many papers.

Other types of advertising are also vulnerable. A six-by-ten-inch ad in the *Washington Post* costs $11.55 per thousand subscribers—sensible for old-fashioned mass marketing, but not for businesses wanting to reach only a narrow segment of the *Post*'s circulation (623,000). And the *Post* reaches only 25 percent of households in its area.

How will this end? About 1,200 of the nation's 1,400-plus dailies have circulations lower than 50,000, and they think they know: They are giving up their role as link to the outside world, opting out of the cooperative news services, and using their brand names and first-mover advantages to become community-based entities, setting up regional cooperatives where appropriate. They may go paperless or

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may not—after excessive debt is purged by bankruptcy, printing may still make sense. On the other hand, an item on the agenda of that canceled editors' convention was to consider removing the word "paper" from the organization's title.

The big-city dailies face knottier problems. Most of them ought to adopt the localized model of the smaller newspapers, but they are ambivalent, and some are cutting back local coverage rather than augmenting it. If they try to maintain the structure established when they had real market power, they probably will die.

The interesting question is: What will happen to the news itself, the beef on McNews's menu? To say that you don't need newspapers because you get your news from the Internet is like saying that you don't need to burn coal because you rely on electricity. The content used by advertisers to hook viewers on the Internet is supplied mostly by newspapers and the wire services they finance. If that newsgathering structure cannot derive financial support from the local monopolies, it too will decline. So how will the Internet's voracious appetite for news be sated?

Logically, one would anticipate the rise of competing newsgathering services of national or global reach, distributed online and directly accessible to readers. Some organizations, such as the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*, already are thinking along these lines. Surely in this lineup there will be room for services congenial to those of a conservative bent. It has been said of Fox News that "Rupert Murdoch discovered a niche market—half the country." There's a profit in that.

There is also a problem. Newspapers' business model depended not only on the ability of the news organizations to monetize their content by attaching advertising to it, but also on the inability of others to do so. When they launched their online businesses, they (with the notable exception of the *Wall Street Journal*) embarked on a course of business suicide, drinking the "information wants to be free" Kool-Aid and in the process empowering every blogger and aggregator to mediate between the news source and the reader, raking off a cut of revenue along the way.

They may not have had much choice: Without the local monopoly, there is no way to charge for web access to national or international news, because readers can go elsewhere to get exactly the same content from the same wire service. But in allowing access by everyone to everything, the news organizations invited a tragedy of the commons, converting the news into a giant fishery into which anyone can dip a line to hook some advertising dollars.

Neither locally oriented papers nor national news services can run without money. They must find a way to monetize their products, whether by subscriptions, per-story micropayments, advertising, or all three. And that means control of access and protection against free-riding.

Conservatives have an opportunity to form an odd-couple alliance with the *New York Times* and other journalistic doyens who are rumbling about how information really wants to be *paid for*. Either we will have news-collection systems based on property rights and enterprise, or we will become dependent on foundations and government subsidies for our news, a system that would maintain the biases of McNews in super-virulent form, protected from market pressure. The crisis in journalism presents an opportunity conservatives should not miss. **NR**

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DEMOCRATS AND BUSINESSMEN, Sitting in a Tree . . .

Big corporations love free enterprise, as long as it isn't too free

BY JONAH GOLDBERG

Big business is lining up to support President-elect Obama's plan to stimulate the economy with the biggest spending spree on roads, bridges and other infrastructure projects since the Eisenhower administration.
—*The Hill*, Dec. 8, 2008

The interaction between government and business will change forever. In a reset economy, the government will be a regulator; and also an industry policy champion, a financier, and a key partner.
—General Electric CEO Jeffrey Immelt, in a letter to stockholders

This is a great start. There are things we don't like about it. But there's time to discuss all that.
—Billy Tauzin, CEO of the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA), on Barack Obama's health-care plan

Honesty and marital necessity require me to state that everything I know about prostitution I have learned from a distance. That said, based on what I've gleaned from reading and from films of dubious artistic value, it seems to me that the farther you move up the prostitution price range, the more elaborate the lies become. A streetwalker trolling the docks during Fleet Week has little opportunity for self-rationalization, elaborate rituals, or ornate fictions. She never asks that drunk petty officer from Manila, "Do you love me?"; nor does she wonder why he never calls or writes. We all know what she's selling, and we're under no illusions about the fact that it's for sale. Sure, for an extra $25, she might pretend to enjoy it, but ultimately, the cheaper the cost, the cheaper the lies.

The same holds true, I suppose, with many areas of commerce. A trip to a four-star restaurant involves lots of ritual, to heighten the richness of the experience. The ambiance surrounding the purchase of a McDonald's Happy Meal, meanwhile, isn't markedly different from the atmosphere at Home Depot when you buy a toilet brush.

But it's prostitution that lends itself best to varying degrees of deception. Tony Soprano's "gumars" always expected to be treated better than the slatterns in the backroom of the Bada Bing Club. And, no doubt, the late French president François Mitterand—who fathered a second family with one of his many mistresses—was no stranger to ornate fictions either. As the costs rise, the compliments become more sincere. The relationships grow not only more complex but more reciprocal—and, most of all, the real lies aren't what the hookers tell the johns, but what both parties tell themselves.

That's something to keep in mind as we watch the spectacle of American big business and the Democratic party seducing each other once again.

BRENDAN SMIALOWSKI/CNP

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Visit any college campus, any Georgetown salon, any sweaty left-wing netroots comment section, or any space sufficiently accursed to have both Nancy Pelosi and a microphone in it, and you will be informed that the Democratic party stands up to corporate fat cats. President Obama spent much of the last two years denouncing the stranglehold that corporate interests have on American politics. "They don't represent ordinary Americans, they don't fund my campaign, and they won't drown out the voices of working families when I am president." "Right-wing and corporate forces," the former director of advocacy for MoveOn.org writes in *The American Prospect*, "will do everything they can to block our agenda on things like universal health care and climate change." It's not just that they tell the world this stuff; they tell it to themselves. Former senator John Edwards—in many ways a cornpone Mitterand—was probably sincere when he said over and over again that he's been preparing his whole life to fight big corporations in behalf of the one of his "two Americas" that doesn't live like him. It's quite easy to imagine his saying words to that effect every morning in front of one of the countless mirrors in his 28,000-square-foot home.

The self-deception can be total. Go to your local used-book store and dig up a copy of Robert Reich's *Locked in the Cabinet*. In his memoirs of serving as Bill Clinton's labor secretary, Reich recounts his experiences fighting the malefactors of great wealth who were determined to undermine progressive policies. In one scene he details how he stood up to the bad guys at a meeting of the National Association of Manufacturers. He described a room not unlike a 19th-century men's club, billowing with cigar smoke and filled with hostile robber barons booing and cursing him. In another vignette, a furious right-wing congressman shouted "Evidence!" at Reich as he made his case for a more "progressive" economic policy. Then there was the time former House Republican leader Bob Michel confessed that Newt Gingrich and company "talk as if they're interested in ideas, in what's good for America. But don't be fooled. They're out to destroy. They'll try to destroy anything that gets in their way, using whatever tactics are available."

It was all dramatic—nay, heroic—stuff. Except none of it happened—none of the drama or heroism, at least. Jonathan Rauch checked the videotapes of the meetings and hearings and it was all as real as a teenage boy's tale of his super-hot swimsuit-model girlfriend who, alas, can't make it to the prom because she lives in Canada. When confronted, Reich said, "Look, the book is a memoir. It's not investigative journalism." "Did you just make them up?" Rauch asked. Reich snapped, "They're in my journal," adding, "I claim no higher truth than my own perceptions."

THEN there's big business. The story corporate America tells itself is that it's the living embodiment of the American Dream. They're for free markets and competition and pull-yourself-up-by-your-bootstraps individualism. They stand opposed, on high principle if nothing else, to government intrusions into the marketplace. If they get involved in the filthy business of lobbying government, it's to protect themselves from the Fabian succubi of the Leviathan state, which is always desperate to drain the lifeblood of entrepreneurialism from the American Way. "As the voice of business," explains the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's website, "the Chamber's core purpose is to fight for free enterprise before Congress, the White House, regulatory agencies, the courts, the court of public opinion, and governments around the world." Their mission statement is even more high-minded: "To advance human progress through an economic, political and social system based on individual freedom, incentive, initiative, opportunity, and responsibility."

The problem with both stories is that they are exactly that—stories, self-esteem boosters that businessmen and liberals repeat not so much so they can respect each other, but so they can respect themselves in the morning. It defies all the data. As NATIONAL REVIEW's Kevin D. Williamson recently noted ("Losing Gordon Gekko," March 9), in the last two election cycles, big Wall Street firms gave more to Democrats than to Republicans. Democrats also led in most other big-business sectors. One explanation of this is that businessmen are opportunistic and their money follows political power. While largely true, this is hardly evidence that big business is steadfast in its free-market principles.

This tendency goes far beyond campaign contributions. Leaf through various editions of *Patterns of Corporate Philanthropy* and you'll find that corporations have always given overwhelmingly to left-leaning non-profits that agitate for anti-business policies. "There are few phenomena so remarkable today," William Simon wrote in one such report in 1988, "as the seemingly relentless determination of America's largest business corporations to set aside a portion of their earnings for the benefit of their enemies."

In his book *The Suicidal Corporation*, journalist Paul Weaver famously recounts how he left his job at *Fortune* to work for Ford's public-affairs department. Excited to champion a great American company and "defend American capitalism," Weaver was dismayed to discover a level of dysfunction that makes the cast of *Dilbert* seem like the Green Berets. Eager to rebut a largely bogus safety campaign against the Ford Pinto, Weaver suggested contacting a friend at the *Wall Street Journal* to see if they might run an editorial defending the company. To the pros at Ford, this was crazy talk. Better to just roll over for the lawsuits, issue a mealy-mouthed denial of wrongdoing, and hope that the whole controversy would go away. Alas, it wouldn't. Finally, the public-affairs chief held a contest for the best idea on how to deal with the controversy. The winning idea? Let's sponsor the PBS show *Washington Week in Review*! Why? Because everyone knows that funding smarmy PBS shows silences the Left. Just ask Bill Moyers.

LIBERTARIAN philosopher Roderick Long puts it well: "There's a popular historical legend that goes like this: Once upon a time (for this is how stories of this kind should begin), back in the 19th century, the United States economy was almost completely unregulated and *laissez-faire*. But then there arose a movement to subject business to regulatory restraint in the interests of workers and consumers, a movement that culminated in the presidencies of Wilson and the two Roosevelts." As Long notes, there's a right-wing and a left-wing version of this fable. The right-wingers are desperate to restore the economic idyll of the 19th century, before the New Deal messed everything up. The left-wingers congratulate themselves for their early victories over the evil forces of Big Business. But, they say, the battle is far from over and they must continue to slash away at the hydra-headed beast of corporate capitalism. Nice stories, but they're not true.

As the historian Gabriel Kolko and others have shown, the

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railroad magnates of the 1870s and 1880s petitioned the government to protect them from the headaches of "cutthroat competition" and relentless rate wars. Were it not for the railroad lobby, there never would have been the Interstate Commerce Commission, which liberal reformers conceived of as the bane of those evil railroad monopolists but was actually their citadel. In 1907 AT&T was having a dickens of a time dealing with the fact that other phone companies had the effrontery to compete against it. To solve this vexing problem, AT&T president Theodore Vail cajoled state governments and the feds to let AT&T become a nationwide monopoly. In 1909 Andrew Carnegie was so plagued by competition that he floated the idea of "government control" of the steel industry in the pages of the *New York Times*. In 1911 the chairman of U.S. Steel, Judge Elbert Gary, told Congress: "I believe we must come to enforced publicity [socialization] and government control . . . even as to prices." As Adam Smith said, "people of the same trade seldom meet together, even for merriment and diversion, but the conversation ends in a conspiracy against the public, or in some contrivance to raise prices."

In high school, I had to read Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, which was presented to me as nothing less than a full-throated indictment of capitalism and big business, the former being the petri dish for the latter. Thank goodness for Sinclair's muckraking yarn about Jurgis Rudkus, we were led to believe; otherwise those evil meat companies would still be selling us ground-up Lithuanian factory workers in our foot-long hotdogs. Yet the truth is that those evil meatpackers *asked* the government to step in. Sinclair himself admitted as much. "The Federal inspection of meat was, historically, established at the packers' request," Sinclair wrote in 1906. "It is maintained and paid for by the people of the United States for the benefit of the packers." A meat-industry spokesmen told Congress back then, "We are now and have always been in favor of the extension of the inspection, also of the adoption of the sanitary regulations that will insure the very best possible conditions." Kolko concurs: "The reality of the matter, of course, is that the big packers were warm friends of regulation, especially when it primarily affected their innumerable small competitors."

Likewise, what big government likes about big business is that it's easier to deal with. When the economy is run by a few giant firms, you always know whom to get on the phone. If you've got a social or economic policy to implement—affirmative action, employer-provided healthcare, the Americans with Disabilities Act—it's much easier to work with giant companies that can afford to pass the costs of compliance on to their customers. It's particularly easy if you're on a first-name basis with the CEOs because you've sat on panels with them—and Bono and George Clooney—in Davos and Aspen every winter and summer. Remember when Hillary Clinton was warned that her health-care plan would destroy countless smaller businesses and she responded with a shrug: "I can't go out and save every undercapitalized entrepreneur in America"? Why should she bother? It's not like those people go to Renaissance Weekend.

Liberals routinely invoke Teddy Roosevelt as a hero for his trust-busting ways as president. For example, in a debate just before the New Hampshire primary, John Edwards railed about how big gas, drug, and oil companies and other "entrenched interests" were "literally stealing our children's future." "Teddy Roosevelt, a great American president—he didn't make deals with the monopolies and the trusts. Teddy Roosevelt took them on, busted the monopolies, busted the trusts. That's what it's going to take." Left out of the story is the fact that TR and pretty much the entire Progressive establishment changed their mind after Roosevelt left office. "The effort at prohibiting all combination has substantially failed," TR explained. "The way out lies, not in attempting to prevent such combinations, but in completely controlling them in the interest of the public welfare." The credit for TR's intellectual evolution from anti-monopolist to monopolist should go to Herbert Croly, the godfather of the Progressive movement and founder of *The New Republic*. "Cooperation" was Croly's watchword. "It should be the effort of all civilized societies to substitute cooperative for competitive methods."

What big business likes about big government is that it clears the field of those pesky smaller, more nimble and entrepreneurial competitors.

THAT'S the key to the tawdry relationship between big business and big government. What big business likes about big government is that it clears the field of those pesky smaller, more nimble and entrepreneurial competitors—you know, the *actual* free marketeers. Government meddling takes much of the guesswork out of business. Think of big utilities. In exchange for letting the government set their rates, they never have to worry about rivals. Profit margins are guaranteed and predictable. History records no instance where the CEO of an electrical utility missed a tee time because a competitor suddenly unveiled an exciting new product.

This has largely been the substance of liberalism ever since, though that's not what liberals tell themselves or the world. The New Deal was a riot of cartelization in which big business and big government worked mercilessly to squeeze out smaller firms from the economy. Trade associations were invited to write the regulations they most desired. Amity Shlaes's *The Forgotten Man* has reminded a whole generation of the story of the Schechters, illiterate Jews whose family's kosher-chicken business was destroyed by the Roosevelt administration in the name of efficiency. They ran afoul of the National Recovery Administration's Code of Fair Competition for the Live Poultry Industry because they allowed customers to select their chickens prior to slaughter (a way of letting the consumer, not the bureaucrats, provide quality control). Initially, the Schechters were sentenced to multiple jail terms for their heinous crimes.

This was no random anecdote. Famed lawyer Clarence Darrow

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was tasked with evaluating the New Deal codes and found that in "virtually all the codes we have examined, one condition has been persistent. . . . In Industry after Industry, the larger units, sometimes through the agency of . . . [a trade association], sometimes by other means, have for their own advantage written the codes, and then, in effect and for their own advantage, assumed the administration of the code they have framed." As the historian Dixon Wecter put it: "The principle . . . seemed to be: to him that hath it shall be given."

And now we have Barack Obama, who is constantly compared to both Abraham Lincoln and Franklin Roosevelt, and who relentlessly invokes Lincoln's "investment" in railroads and FDR's New Deal as precedents for his ambitious agenda. We certainly haven't had a president more rhetorically antagonistic to corporate power since FDR. But just because Obama talks dirty to big business doesn't mean he dislikes it. For starters, the supposedly anti-corporate community organizer has been working tirelessly to save the auto industry. His debt to big labor is obviously a major factor, but it sure does seem that while Democrats have problems with successful corporations, they will do anything to save dying ones.

Or take his energy plan, which is meant to liberate the American people from the stranglehold of something or other. Timothy Carney, author of the indispensable book *The Big Ripoff*, recently recounted the ways in which Obama's cap-and-trade plan will enrich General Electric. "Reviewing their lobbying filings, you might think you were looking at Al Gore's agenda," Carney writes in the *DC Examiner*. GE spent nearly $20 billion on lobbying in 2008 on such action items as the "Climate Stewardship Act," "Electric Utility Cap and Trade Act," and the "Global Warming Reduction Act." Why? Because GE has set up a business to sell carbon credits.

There's only one possible hitch: They might as well have set up a pixie-dust commodity exchange if Obama doesn't suddenly start charging Americans for their CO_2. So it's worth remembering that in 2007 GE's subsidiary NBC devoted more than 150 hours of programming to "Green Week," in which every program in its line-up, from *Sunday Night Football* to *The Biggest Loser* (no, not the taxpayer, the weight-loss reality show), incorporated anti-climate-change messages into its scripts. On *Days of Our Lives* a couple had a lovely green wedding. GE wasn't being left-wing, mind you; it was merely being a "good corporate citizen." One shudders to think what the Left would say if Fox dedicated 150 hours to pro-life messages in its programming.

Then there's Obama's health-care plan. On March 5 he assembled all the major industry players. "We're going to get some kind of an agreement here," promised Tom Donahue of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, "whether it's two-thirds of what everybody wants or three-quarters of what everybody wants or who knows. If you don't get in this game . . . you're on the menu." So much for that bit about fighting for free enterprise; staying off the menu is so much more important. Former Rep. Billy Tauzin, now the head of PhRMA—the trade association for those allegedly evil drug companies—is foursquare behind universal government-backed health care and praises Obama's plan because it provides "$650 billion spent to better insure Americans for the products we make." So it's clear that big business will abandon its virtuous attachment to the free market if the price is right.

The point here is not to say that liberals secretly love corporate America, any more than the Masters of the Universe privately yearn to be the sugar daddies of the nanny state. But American corporations are, if anything, operationally liberal. Milton Friedman and Joseph Schumpeter both thought capitalism's weakness was that it couldn't fend off the mores of an anti-capitalist culture. More generally, business considerations often dictate the adoption of "progressive" policies, and that's not always a bad thing. When Budweiser's August "Gussie" Busch bought the St. Louis Cardinals in 1953, he was annoyed by the Brooklyn Dodgers' perennial success, which was attributable in large part to Jackie Robinson. He asked team executives how many blacks they were cultivating, and when they said "none," he was appalled. "But we sell beer to everyone!" he exclaimed. The next year the Cardinals had a black first baseman, Tom Alston.

For good or ill, family-oriented Disney was a trailblazer on gay rights in the 1990s, providing partnership benefits to its employees. Fortune 500 companies are certainly far more pro-affirmative-action than the House Republican caucus. While some companies are not yet onboard the climate-change bandwagon, you can be sure their marketing departments spend a lot of time and energy keeping it a secret. Indeed, while I can think of scores of companies eager to be associated with one leftish social or cultural issue or another, it's hard to think of a single one (other than privately held Koch Industries) that's keen on being perceived as right-wing at all—beyond a general commitment to "support the troops."

Meanwhile, what about us conservatives (and libertarians)? We're constantly being denounced as right-wing apologists for big corporations, but in reality we're like the longsuffering wives who make excuses for our husbands, even though they let us down time and time again. At the same time, we're constantly hearing from strategists who insist that the answer is to loosen up, baby—become more socially liberal while staying fiscally conservative. The key problem is that fiscal conservatism, whatever its merits, isn't *economic conservatism* in the free-market tradition of Hayek, Friedman, Reagan, et al. As a generalization, when people say they are fiscal conservatives but social liberals, what they are really saying is that they are, simply, moderate liberals. Olympia Snowe, Susan Collins, Arlen Specter, and the rest aren't socially conservative, and they aren't economically conservative either.

The perverse irony here is that most social conservatives tend to be economic conservatives as well (though one could say George W. Bush was socially conservative and fiscally liberal). Reaganite, pro-life conservatives also tend to be Reaganite free-marketers. Phil Gramm, the greatest deregulator of the last 20 years: pro-life. Ron Paul, the libertarian crusader: pro-life. Christine Todd Whitman and Colin Powell: They're pro-choice and pro-activist-government.

The really odd part about it all is that full-spectrum conservatives greatly outnumber the socially liberal crowd—yet they're supposed to be the problem. They—heck, *we*—enter the party as cheap dates and in due course become battered spouses. We make apologies for CEOs who don't care what we think, and we never complain about the ingratitude of institutions we support. We fight for free-trade agreements and tax cuts, and they repay us time and again by jumping into bed with Barack Obama. And they don't even bother to wash off the smell of his cologne. **NR**

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Media REALISM

How the GOP should handle increasingly biased journalists

BY EDWARD W. GILLESPIE

OVER the past few months, a steady stream of journalists from mainstream-media outlets—at least eight, led by *Time* Washington-bureau chief Jay Carney—have abandoned journalism for positions in the Obama administration or with congressional Democrats. Fortunately for them, the difficult transition from objective reporting to ardent advocacy of a party's agenda was made easier by the head start they got in last year's campaign. Though there have long been concerns about liberal bias in the media, 2008 was the year the referees took off their striped shirts and donned a team's jersey.

Some say it's a shift forced by the rapidly changing business model of journalism; others say longstanding liberal bias has simply become more apparent in a media culture that demands quick and constant content. But there are very few who deny that a marked change occurred. In a December dispute with the *New York Times* over an incredibly biased story on the root causes of the housing crisis (Guess what? It was all Bush's fault!), I put it this way: "I don't know if the *New York Times*'s shoddy reporting is a result of its junk-bond status, or if the *New York Times*'s junk-bond status is a result of its shoddy reporting."

As a conservative who has worked with reporters for 25 years and generally enjoyed friendly relations with them, it's a dispiriting change—one to which Republicans must adapt, and soon. Despite witnessing the media's evolution firsthand, I was slow coming to this conclusion.

In 1985, at the age of 23, I became the press secretary for a newly elected congressman from Texas named Dick Armey. I began working for Armey, an unknown economics professor who'd upset a well-known Democratic incumbent in the 1984 Reagan reelection landslide, less than a month after he was sworn in. This began a long journey dealing with various and changing media, from regional press to the national Bigfoots, as I worked my way up to being chairman of the Republican National Committee and counselor to Pres. George W. Bush.

I cut my teeth working with the Texas press corps, which at the time had a strong presence in the nation's capital. Dallas, Houston, and San Antonio were all two-paper towns with Washington bureaus; the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* had a big Washington office as well; and mid-sized cities like El Paso, Amarillo, and Beaumont had D.C. stringers. The big metro-area TV stations had their own Washington bureaus, too, and the Associated Press had a full-time reporter covering the Texas delegation.

Mr. Gillespie is a former chairman of the Republican National Committee. He served as counselor to Pres. George W. Bush.

Even as a junior member in the minority, Armey generated news, and I established a good working relationship with the Texas beat reporters. There were times when I gave them a friendly brush-back over instances of bias—they were prone to describing Armey as right-wing, though you'd never see a Democrat like Jim Wright described as left-wing—but for the most part they quoted Armey accurately, described his efforts fairly, published his op-ed pieces from time to time, and engaged in spirited editorial-board discussions.

WHEN Armey entered the House Republican leadership as conference chairman in 1993, in the wake of Bill Clinton's election, I also interacted with reporters for national outlets covering Congress—the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, CNN, network-news correspondents, etc. After we captured the majority in 1995, these interactions became constant.

In this role, I found my objections over biased coverage more frequent and more pronounced than they had been with the regional press, and I generally felt that we were swimming against the tide. But I also felt that reporters *tried* to give Republicans a fair shake, and I enjoyed the give-and-take in the Speaker's Lobby off the House floor and up in the House Radio-TV Gallery.

As RNC chairman in 2003 and 2004, I grew increasingly frustrated with the political media and their obsession with process (rather than substance). To report about process—to predict what's going to happen rather than describe what already has happened—is to obtain a license for injecting opinion.

When I joined the White House in June 2007, I was still naïvely hopeful that we could get an honest hearing from the MSM. It did not take long for the scales to fall from my eyes. The national press corps loathed the president—not personally, I don't think, but politically. Their reporting dripped with disdain, and their stories were frequently riddled with negative adverbs and adjectives. On issues like the Iraq War, the environment, and life, there was often little distinction between our treatment in liberal blogs and our treatment in major daily newspapers.

As I wrote in my book *Winning Right: Campaign Politics and Conservative Policies*, I hate the media, but I happen to like reporters. This is a sentiment shared by many Republicans who deal with the media as part of their jobs, but the fact is that Republicans interact socially with members of the media far less frequently than Democrats do.

I have a lot of friends on the Democratic side of the aisle, and I'm frequently struck by their mentions of having had a national news editor over for dinner last night, or having been to a school event with a network correspondent over the weekend. It's always a little disconcerting to be in the Green Room with a Democrat with whom you are about to joust on the air, only to have the journalist on the panel come in and gush, "That was a lot of fun last week, wasn't it?" The truth is, Democrats and national reporters swim in a social pond that few Republican streams feed into.

Today, newspapers are folding, Washington bureaus being shuttered. And as the national media have become smaller, they have become even more homogeneous—and that makes it easier for them to indulge their cultural biases and be swayed by liberal blogs. The recent mainstream-media flap over Rush Limbaugh, generated and fueled by the Obama political machine, is only the latest evidence of the changed media dynamic.

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White House press secretary Robert Gibbs helped move the story along by suggesting that reporters ask Republican members of Congress whether they agree or disagree with Limbaugh's comments.

Now, this is the kind of suggestion that operatives from both parties give reporters from time to time, but it's usually whispered at a campaign event, or after half a bottle of wine at one of those painful black-tie press dinners. President Obama's press secretary can say it right out loud from the White House podium. And instead of being insulted, or asking Gibbs whether it's proper for a public official paid with taxpayer dollars to say such a thing, the reporters carry out the hit.

So, what are the lessons for Republicans?

First, when a White House press secretary presumes to be the assignment editor for the national news media, be prepared to respond to reporters following their marching orders.

Second, understand that the media will play the role of attack dog for Democrats, but not for Republicans. The media will stay on a negative story for days and continue pressing for answers when it involves a Republican. But, as a rule, when a story arises that is damaging to Democrats, the media will report or repeat it only if Republicans make it an issue, in which case they'll frame the story as a Republican "attack." Though most Republican candidates would rather not "wield the knife" themselves, these stories don't get much attention unless they do. (Later, of course, the media go after the Republican for going negative.)

In 2006 the Left perfected the cycle: A blog posts an attack on a Republican candidate one day, the local daily paper runs a story two days later based on the blog account, and two days after that, a national Democratic campaign committee launches a "ripped from the headlines" attack ad citing the dailies. No Republican should be caught off-guard by this phenomenon again.

Third, be willing to call out the media on instances of blatant bias. This can be uncomfortable, because there's generally still a rapport between Republican officials, their flacks, and reporters. Yet it was smart of the McCain campaign to make an issue of the *New York Times*'s ridiculously slanted coverage last year. It was also necessary for the White House to make public a letter I wrote to NBC News, in which I challenged the network's refusal to acknowledge that Iraq was not in a civil war and objected to the deceptive editing of a Richard Engel interview with President Bush. Both of these disputes went public only after repeated, discreet objections had no effect on the news organizations in question.

Reminding voters that the media often have their own agenda can help offset bias. For example, in the 2004 South Dakota Senate race between John Thune and Tom Daschle, the pro-Daschle bias of the state's major daily newspaper was broadly recognized. Many people looked at a campaign story in the *Argus Leader* as skeptically as they would a Daschle campaign mailing. There is ample empirical evidence for Republican campaigns to emphasize: National reporters identify themselves as liberal over conservative by a margin of four to one, according to the 2008 Pew Foundation survey. And that's with 53 percent identifying themselves as "moderates," which may very well be a conditioned response for journalists who are actually liberal.

Fourth, go around the traditional news outlets. Ronald Reagan was famously able to address the American people directly, and technology makes it remarkably easy for today's Republicans to follow his lead. Social-networking sites, blogs, Internet and telephone town-hall meetings, campaign websites, and e-mail lists are all ways to get around the media's filter.

Fifth, and perhaps most important, accept the reality of today's mainstream media. Too many Republican officials and candidates operate in a mindset that was formed more than a decade ago, when the mainstream media strived for seriousness and objectivity. Those days are gone.

The day I sent the letter to NBC News, Chris Matthews discussed it on *Hardball*. He asked an MSNBC contributor, a leading reporter for one of the nation's major dailies, to comment on my criticism. "That's completely disingenuous," replied the reporter.

I was surprised to be called "disingenuous" on the air by someone for whom I'd been a trusted source for more than a decade—someone who hadn't even called me to get my perspective. I shot him an e-mail to that effect. He sheepishly told me that he didn't know my letter would come up during his segment and had not even seen it. That, of course, didn't stop him from making a sneering comment to please a TV-news host now famous for the tingle Barack Obama sent up his leg.

And that's a big problem with "news" today. Too many reporters no longer report; they comment. The lines between news and "news analysis," and between "news analysis" and opinion, have been all but washed away in the 24/7 Internet-and-cable news environment. That's not to say there aren't still many reporters who strive to be fair, report the facts, and avoid commentary. Indeed, one successful media outlet, the relatively new *Politico*, seems intent on hiring every "old school" reporter in Washington.

At present, Democrats use the media to their distinct advantage: The mainstream press favors them, and they are better than Republicans at using alternative outlets. It was Barack Obama, after all, who proved that a candidate has the ability to disseminate facts and a message to millions of voters directly. Republicans need to turn this tide, and fast. **NR**

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Out of the FREEZER

At last, some questions on in vitro fertilization

BY RAMESH PONNURU

Louise Brown, the world's first "test tube baby," was born in 1978, ten years to the day after Pope Paul VI issued *Humanae Vitae*. It was a resonant coincidence. The papal encyclical is best known for reaffirming the classical Christian prohibition on contraception, but it also condemned as immoral attempts to separate procreation and sex from the other end. In the decades since then, in vitro fertilization has become a nearly universally accepted social phenomenon. Some states even require health insurers to cover its costs.

Catholic teaching on contraception may be widely ignored, even by most Catholics. But most Catholics are not even aware of their church's teaching on IVF. The pro-life movement has had very little to say about this form of "reproductive choice," and evangelical pro-lifers have often supported it.

But questions about the ethics of IVF, at least as it is currently practiced in America, are now being more frequently asked. Nadya Suleman, the "octomom" from California, set off a national discussion when she had eight babies using assisted-reproduction techniques, even though she already had six children, was not married, and could not support herself. IVF has led sporadically to freakish news stories. A doctor went to jail in 1992 for substituting his own sperm for that of the intended fathers. A British couple in 2006 reportedly abandoned their daughters, conceived using IVF, because they wanted boys. Courts have repeatedly had to deal with bitter struggles between parents over the embryos they had conceived. But it is not these stories so much as other technological advances that are renewing the controversy over IVF.

The development of embryonic-stem-cell research as a field of inquiry is one such advance. During the Bush administration, many congressmen thought that the federal government should fund stem-cell research using some of the many unimplanted embryos produced by IVF clinics. That debate led pro-lifers to begin asking why the clinics were producing, and often destroying, so many embryos in the first place. The clinics' ever more sophisticated methods of screening embryos for their genetic traits before implanting them are also giving new strength to fears about "designer babies." Medical researchers, finally, are increasingly raising questions about the health of the children produced by IVF.

While the issues involving IVF may be acquiring new prominence, none of them is novel. The debate over IVF in the 1970s largely concentrated on whether the efforts to develop the technique constituted unethical experimentation on embryos and children, as Paul Ramsey, a founder of bioethics, argued. He feared that IVF would not be safe for the children created, and thought that making it safe would require a process of trial and error that was itself unacceptable.

Leon Kass raised the same concern. He also warned, presciently, that IVF would produce "surplus" embryos that would then pose nearly insoluble dilemmas. (In particular, he warned, in 1972, that we would be tempted to use the embryos for experiments.) His most fundamental objection was that IVF would change our conception of ourselves. "We have paid some high prices for the technological conquest of nature, but none perhaps so high as the intellectual and spiritual costs of seeing nature as mere material for our manipulation, exploitation, and transformation. With the powers for biological engineering now gathering, there will be splendid new opportunities for a similar degradation in our view of man. Indeed, we are already witnessing the erosion of our idea of man as something splendid or divine, as a creature with freedom and dignity. And clearly, if we come to see ourselves as meat, then meat we shall become."

The Catholic rejection of IVF is rooted in similar premises, ones that are relevant to today's debates. Catholicism is not against all assisted-reproduction techniques: It does not condemn the use of fertility drugs by married women. It objects in principle to IVF for two reasons. IVF, like contraceptive sex, is taken to "instrumentalize" the body, to use it as the mere tool of the conscious, desiring self. Worse, it threatens to change the status of children, from gifts to products of manufacture. Anyone who worries about the prospect of "designer babies" can see what underlies the Kass/Catholic position, even if he does not share it. That British couple seems to have seen the children IVF made possible as products that could be returned.

Another class of objections concerns practices that, while not intrinsic to IVF, often accompany it. For the sake of efficiency, American IVF practitioners often create multiple embryos for each female patient. Many of those embryos are never implanted in the womb, creating an ethical quandary. Pro-lifers believe that "discarding" these embryos is a species of homicide and as such grossly unjust. But freezing the embryos indefinitely is at least disquieting. IVF also often involves implanting multiple embryos, and thus often leads to multiple pregnancies. Such pregnancies can be dangerous, and many mothers with them then opt for "selective reduction." The least viable, or least desired, embryos are weeded out. (A particularly fatuous bioethicist insisted to the *New York Times* during the "octomom" controversy that selective reduction was not the same thing as an abortion since it did not end a pregnancy.)

The mass creation and destruction of "excess" embryos—the terminology is symptomatic of the dehumanization involved—illustrates that some slopes are indeed slippery. When people said that IVF would lead to such evils they were dismissed. In 1980, the longtime feminist columnist Ellen Goodman wrote an approving piece about the opening of an IVF clinic. "A fear of many who protest the opening

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of this clinic is that doctors there will fertilize myriad eggs and discard the 'extras' and the abnormal as if they were no more meaningful than a dish of caviar. But this fear seems largely unwarranted. . . . Now we have to watch the development of this technology—willing to see it grow in the right direction and ready to say no." Needless to say, that "no" never came, either from Goodman or from society at large.

IVF has facilitated some of the changes in family structure that social conservatives decry. In some places, such as California, doctors are forbidden by law to discriminate against single patients based on their marital status. While IVF has not, of course, driven the increase in illegitimacy over the last four decades, there does seem to be something particularly wrong about deliberately bringing a child into the world without a mother and a father married to each other. IVF has been central to such innovations as lesbian parenting and, more recently, "arranged parenting." Liza Mundy publicized this last practice in her 2007 book on assisted reproduction, *Everything Conceivable*: You can advertise for someone to have a baby with you using IVF, and work out the custody arrangements beforehand. "Arranged parenting" is, in other words, a way to deliberately bring a child into a familial set-up that looks like the aftermath of an amicable divorce.

Because of the desire of patients and the industry for privacy, it is harder to assess patient outcomes than you might think. In 2004, the president's council on bioethics, then chaired by Leon Kass, reported, "There is no comprehensive, uniform, and enforceable mechanism for data collection, monitoring, or oversight of how the new reproductive biotechnologies affect the well-being of the children conceived with their aid, the egg donors, or the gestational mothers." But we do know that twins and triplets are more likely to die in infancy than singletons, and that IVF increases the number of multiple births. Infants who were conceived through IVF seem to be born prematurely more often, and have lower birthweights, than those conceived the old-fashioned way. The Centers for Disease Control has reported that babies conceived through IVF also seem to have a slightly increased risk of several birth defects.

But while concern about the world that reproductive technology is creating is rising—some of the reviews of Mundy's book were by clearly uneasy liberals—the industry retains enormous goodwill. The desire of infertile couples to pass on their genes should not be underestimated. The emotional associations people have with fertility treatments are positive. They have brought great joy into a lot of homes. It is nothing like abortion, which most people, wherever they stand on its legal status, see as a sad event.

Sophisticated defenders of embryo-destructive stem-cell research have frequently suggested that pro-lifers are morally unserious in their opposition to it, because otherwise they would take on IVF. Pro-lifers have for the most part brushed off this debater's point, instinctively concluding that there is no reason that they should be the only political actors who are not allowed to pick their battles. But a reform of the industry ought be among the long-term goals of the pro-life movement.

It should be on other people's agendas as well. Many supporters of legal abortion aver that their position implies no devaluation of human life. Their views, they say, are rooted in a desire not to intrude on the bodily autonomy of pregnant women, particularly those in difficult circumstances. This category of pro-choicers ought to be open to taking some steps to stop the destruction of human embryos when these considerations do not apply.

Many European countries limit the number of embryos that can be implanted in a reproductive cycle. States in the U.S. could follow their lead, thus reducing the chance that embryos will be "selectively reduced" and reducing the danger of multiple pregnancies to women and children—albeit at the cost of also reducing the efficiency of the process. We could also limit, as Italy does, the creation of embryos to the number that a couple could reasonably be expected to implant. Here technological development may work in favor of reform. We now have the capacity to freeze eggs and, if desired, fertilize them later. Freezing embryos should no longer be necessary for IVF to proceed.

Other reforms are worth pursuing even for those who place little or no value on human life in its early stages. It would make sense to collect more data on health outcomes and disclose the findings to prospective patients. Surely consumer protections in this field should be stronger, not weaker, than in others.

Americans United for Life, a pro-life group, has put maps on its website that show which states impose these types of regulations. Those maps are, for the most part, a sea of white, since few states do. But interest in legislation is rising. Georgia is considering a bill to restrict the number of embryos that can be created in any reproductive cycle. Louisiana has in recent years prohibited the intentional destruction of IVF embryos. My guess is that we are going to see more such legislation in the next few years. Even if this legislation accomplishes nothing else, moving the practices of the IVF industry from unknown and unquestioned to debatable will itself be an improvement. **NR**

For the sake of efficiency, American IVF practitioners often create multiple embryos for each female patient. Many of those embryos are never implanted in the womb, creating an ethical quandary.

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‘THE WAR THAT HAS TO Be Won’

But will our soldiers be given the chance to win it?

BY BING WEST

In Afghanistan, President Obama has pledged to “wage the war that has to be won.” To accomplish that, the administration will unveil a new strategy in April. Recently the doughty Sen. Joseph Lieberman published an op-ed in the *Wall Street Journal*, proposing one such strategy. What is needed, Lieberman opined, is for someone to take charge, for additional troops to be sent into action, and for the U.S. Congress to sustain a nation-building strategy. This is all good advice, but implementing it will be exceedingly tricky.

First of all, it is not clear who will be in charge. Obama has appointed Richard Holbrooke, who played a key role in halting the war in the Balkans in the mid-1990s, as the presidential special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan. Holbrooke, nicknamed “The Bulldozer,” said his mandate was “to help coordinate a clearly chaotic foreign assistance program.” He promised to achieve progress by expunging chaos: “If our resources are mobilized and coordinated and pulled together, we can quadruple, quintuple, multiply by tenfold the effectiveness of our efforts there.”

A recent report to Congress criticized a “lack of coherence” in disbursing $32 billion in U.S. and $25 billion in NATO European reconstruction funds. Here’s just one example of this incoherence: We know the Afghans will have to protect themselves eventually, yet training, equipping, and paying the Afghan army has accounted for less than 10 percent of U.S. expenditures in Afghanistan. Although there are 74,000 U.S. and NATO European troops in country, we are short 2,000 trainers for the Afghan security forces. That reflects badly on past management priorities. Indeed, General Petraeus is arguing for a doubling of the size of the Afghan army.

Perhaps Holbrooke will emerge as a deus ex machina to set things straight. But right now he is one of eight strong-willed senior officials who include Afghanistan in their portfolios. General Petraeus, who turned around a losing situation in Iraq, is putting together a strategy for both Pakistan and Afghanistan. Gen. David McKiernan, who commands the troops in Afghanistan, also has a strategy; he reports both to Petraeus and to Gen. Bantz Craddock, the NATO commander in Brussels. Craddock has his own ideas, including a clampdown on drug trafficking, which several European countries oppose. Karl Eikenberry, who will be the new ambassador to Afghanistan, was the military commander there in 2006–2007 as an Army general; he views the feeble and corrupt Kabul government as the key problem. Vice President Joseph Biden, who visits Afghanistan frequently, holds similar views about Kabul. The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Adm. Michael Mullen, meets monthly with the Pakistani chief of staff to urge action along the Afghan frontier. Retired Marine general Jim Jones, now Obama’s national security adviser, served as NATO commander and has views on Afghanistan similar to those of Petraeus.

The record of presidential envoys like Holbrooke in theaters of war is spotty. After Amb. L. Paul Bremer was appointed presidential envoy to Iraq in 2003, he reported directly to President Bush, offering judgments on military operations. This created turmoil and resentment inside a U.S. military that believed unity of command had been violated. After Bremer departed the scene, Gen. George Casey and Amb. John Negroponte co-authored a strategic campaign plan specifying their respective responsibilities in Iraq. Amb. Ryan Crocker and General Petraeus continued that tradition. If that model is followed, the Afghan campaign plan will be authored by Ambassador Eikenberry and General McKiernan, with Holbrooke’s dual-country diplomacy covered in an appendix. Under that framework, though, Holbrooke would not play the role of *über*-coordinator. Moreover, Afghanistan is a NATO project, so any strategy for it must emanate from NATO, and not be presented as solely an American reassessment.

As national security adviser, Jones must pull together these diverse strands. And either he or the chairman of the Joint Chiefs must assume the role of independent risk assessor, alerting the president when things are not going well. When Iraq deteriorated in 2006, it was the national security adviser, Stephen Hadley, who assessed the risk and developed the surge strategy while the Pentagon dawdled. Jones is likely to be thrust into a similar position as the risk assessor for Afghanistan, offering judgments to the president if friction arises between the military commanders and the president’s envoy.

As lines of authority and responsibility are being clarified, another very important issue concerns the Afghan strategy itself. On this matter there are two broad choices: intense nation-building, or nation-building lite. Senator Lieberman favors the former, calling for “a nationwide, civil-military campaign plan,” which would include sending more American civilians into the field to jump-start government services, plus stiff anti-corruption and anti-drug-trafficking measures. On the other hand, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates has advocated what sounds like nation-building lite: “If we set ourselves the objective of creating some sort of Central Asian Valhalla over there, we will lose.” The basic objective, according to Gates, is to keep Afghanistan from becoming a haven and a launching pad for extremists. That is considerably less ambitious than nation-building. To achieve that minimalist goal will require three tasks: (1) provide security in the rural areas, (2) link that security system to the government in Kabul, and (3) prevent disruptive raids from Pakistan.

The first task—providing local security—depends on the morale of the fighters on both sides. War is about killing until the other side quits. The preferred American way of war is to fix and destroy the opposing army, but that doesn’t work with insurgencies. Instead, the population must be protected from, and persuaded to inform against, the insurgents. To accomplish that, the American soldier must lead the Afghan soldier by example and seek out the Taliban, who are more than willing to fight.

Due to the distances between units, our forces cannot do that right now. Instead they are only reacting to Taliban attacks. To seize

Mr. West, a former combat Marine and former assistant secretary of defense, is the author of The Strongest Tribe *and four other books on counterinsurgency.*

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the initiative and provide local security will require aggressive patrolling, pursuit, and raids when the opportunity arises. The Taliban must learn to fear NATO, Afghan, and American soldiers. So by summer, U.S. forces must initiate heavy fighting to push back the Taliban, then turn over to reliable Afghan forces the areas that have been cleared.

Gates is reluctant to send more than 60,000 U.S. troops into Afghanistan; he has said he wants to put an "Afghan face" on the war. That has been done successfully before. Special Forces and combined-action platoons in Vietnam employed squad-sized units to train village militias, backed up by regular units of the South Vietnamese army. These militias were successful in the limited role of protecting their home villages; the war was lost for larger-scale strategic reasons. Similarly, in Iraq, U.S. soldiers partnered with hundreds of local neighborhood watches to expunge al-Qaeda.

Currently there are more than a hundred American platoons partnered with Afghan units in rural outposts near the Pakistan border. That program will be expanded. Simultaneously, Special Forces teams are training village-level militias to protect their homes and a main highway leading to Kabul. Once these techniques are developed, they will be applied in other villages.

In Iraq, the Sunni tribes started coming over to the American side in late 2006. That change in attitude, called the Awakening, provided the bedrock upon which Petraeus based his winning strategy. Shortly before al-Qaeda killed him, I asked Sheik Abu Risha Sattar, who led the Awakening, why the tribes hadn't awakened earlier and saved bloodshed on both sides. "You Americans couldn't convince us," he replied. "We Sunnis had to convince ourselves."

Sattar's words should serve as a warning about the difficulty of predicting when and why the tide of an insurgent battle will begin to ebb. We don't know what dynamic, if any, will cause the Pashtun sub-tribes on the Afghan side of the border to band together decisively against the Taliban gangs of Pashtuns attacking from Pakistan. We do know that the example set by staunch American soldiers can make a huge difference. Americans will provide a temporary glue, but eventually the Afghans must bind together through their own tribal dynamics.

THE second task is creating a responsive central government that deserves the support of the population. While most Afghans detest the Taliban, they don't think much of Pres. Hamid Karzai's government either. It has degraded its legitimacy through corruption, selfishness, and inaction. At least the Taliban has an ideology and a ruthless, fervid religiosity intensified by jihad against the foreigner. Kabul has offered no credible counter-ideology. Afghans will be much more likely to oppose the Taliban if the government presents an alternative they can believe in.

President Obama, signaling his displeasure, has held Karzai at arm's length. Karzai has countered with the populist card, complaining to the press about civilian casualties caused by NATO air strikes. He also threatened to move the upcoming presidential election forward to May instead of holding it in August (when opposing candidates will be better organized), until local and international pressure made him back down. It will take all the skills of Holbrooke, Eikenberry, and McKiernan to keep the government in Kabul focused on delivering services to vulnerable rural areas instead of manipulating every lever of power to ensure its reelection.

The case of Iraq showed that the U.S. government can exert leverage on a shaky government by using tenacity and moral suasion. There, American officers and diplomats took up residence in the key ministries, both mentoring and intervening when catastrophe loomed. The dodgy prime minister, Nouri Maliki, was cajoled and boxed in by the admirable Amb. Ryan Crocker and the U.S. military. On numerous occasions I watched as a captain, a colonel, or a general, simmering with anger over obvious incompetence or corruption, forced an Iraqi official to do the right thing. Over 10,000 U.S. officers and NCOs were attached to the Iraqi government at every level, from the neighborhood to the prime minister's office—a ratio of about 20 or 30 U.S. military officers for each U.S. civilian.

The Pentagon does not want to duplicate that model in Afghanistan, so it will expect the State Department to beef up its own ranks and take the lead in putting Afghan civil servants on the right path. There's a problem, though: The World Bank, the U.S. Agency for International Development, and diplomats have traditionally accepted corruption in a host nation as part of doing business. This culture will have to change. In particular, the Kabul government can be turned around only if its ties to drug money are cut. Eikenberry, taking over as ambassador, understands this problem. He and Holbrooke must persuade the State Department to take up a mission of hectoring officials on a massive scale. Our objective is to prevent the reemergence of extremist dominance, and whether this can be achieved with a weak central government is questionable.

THE third task will be the hardest of all: depriving al-Qaeda of its sanctuary in Pakistan. Peeling away Taliban hangers-on within Afghanistan is a sound tactic, but it's not a recipe for success inside Pakistan's western frontier, where Pashtun tribes are increasingly controlled by extremists. In recent decades, Pakistan's elite in Islamabad believed their country's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency could manipulate Pashtun fundamentalists, collectively called the Taliban, to make sure Afghanistan did not align with India. Beginning in the late 1970s, CIA contacts with the mujahideen were controlled by the ISI. Three decades later, U.S. officials don't know whether the controlling interests inside Pakistan have swung against the extremists or are playing both sides.

After the Marriott Hotel in Islamabad was bombed last September, the Pentagon believed the incident had turned Pakistan's army against the extremists. Yet in mid-February the government ceded the district of Swat to the Taliban, which had fought the army to a standstill. Inside the army, officers are wary of one another's loyalties. It will take at least a decade for the Pakistani army—which now lacks motivation, tactics, and equipment—to establish control along the frontier. Before that happens, the ISI could fracture the radical movements by using treachery, assassinations, and bribery—especially if U.S. Special Operations forces covertly assist them. The Obama strategy for dismembering Pakistan's terrorist sanctuaries must be multifaceted and covert, including more U.S. airborne and ground attacks against high-value targets.

Today, trends in the border region are unfavorable, because neither the government of Afghanistan nor that of Pakistan has a compelling message or a track record that attracts widespread loyalty. Despite all their faults, we must aid both governments, not least

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because we did not finish the fight while the world still trembled before our wrath. When thousands of Americans were killed at Pearl Harbor, our nation went to war. Had the Japanese claimed we could not pursue them, say, across the International Date Line, we would have laughed. Yet after bin Laden killed thousands in 2001, our generals, politicians, and president stopped at the arbitrary Durand Line (the official border between Afghanistan and Pakistan, drawn by a British colonial official in 1893) and thus granted a sanctuary to al-Qaeda when it was at its weakest. When attacked at home, we responded as a kinder, gentler nation—and were less feared for our response.

On the positive side, the Taliban and al-Qaeda lack a coordinated strategy inside Afghanistan. They have no oil-spot tactic of creeping toward the capital city, village by village, as did the Viet Cong in the early 1960s. Their advantages are hardiness, a sanctuary, and a ferocious ideology; their weakness is threadbare logistics, which supports only episodic attacks and engenders resentment from villagers forced to provide food and shelter. Their depredations have so alienated the tribes that American advisers find plenty of volunteers for the local militias they train; the problem is distrust that NATO forces will really remain. The U.S. Army also gives the Afghan army the necessary lift and firepower support to respond to large-scale insurgent assaults. In exchange for paying and equipping the army and police, though, the U.S. must insist upon shared control over promotions and leadership. Getting there will be rough, but given time and resources, our military can be relied upon to control the battlefield and gradually turn over the fight to Afghan forces.

Still, building up Afghanistan's army and militia amounts to playing defense and containing the threat, which is not war-winning. To win the war, al-Qaeda must be crushed inside Pakistan. Mullen has achieved a quiet cooperation between U.S. units and Pakistani border outposts, aimed at sharing intelligence, but the U.S. and Pakistan still have reason to distrust each other. Congress has switched aid to Pakistan on and off, while the executive branch has alternately embraced and rebuffed Pakistan's leaders, whose motivations and loyalties are opaque and mercurial.

Obama has said that "the heart of the new Afghanistan policy is going to be a smarter Pakistan policy." Inside Pakistan, the political struggle pits some government officials against others who secretly favor the fundamentalists; how we can be "smarter" about this remains to be seen. Both Afghanistan and Pakistan have an incentive to project a perception of unrest in order to ensure the steady infusion of U.S. money, so whatever the answer, being smarter is certain to cost us hundreds of millions of dollars.

In sum, satisfactory outcomes in Afghanistan and Pakistan will require generational patience in the face of difficult and changing conditions. The basic question is whether the political will exists in America to sustain a low-level war for the next decade and to remain implacable in destroying al-Qaeda.

Sen. John Kerry, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, recently wrote that "a comprehensive strategy, sufficient resources and bipartisan resolve will lead to success in Afghanistan." These were brave words, considering that Kerry and his fellow Democrats have refused to supply sufficient resources for defense. Obama has proposed a budget that reduced spending for Iraq and Afghanistan from $140 billion in fiscal 2009 to $50 billion in fiscal 2011. That won't be possible if there's serious fighting in Afghanistan. In addition, Obama intends to hold total military spending constant through 2016. That will reduce defense from 4 to 3 percent of GDP. As personnel costs have increased over the past five years, procurement funding has decreased. With less-modern equipment to fight the next war, the net capability of our forces will fall and casualties will increase. The services are understandably concerned.

Obama has reason to tread carefully. Pres. Jimmy Carter also had high goals, but the gap between his performance and his rhetoric inculcated an attitude of cynicism throughout the ranks of the military. To win in Afghanistan, Obama must lobby his party to support the war effort, year after year, and to supply the necessary resources. Instead, by promising that he will win while reducing funding, he's made a daunting task sound impossibly easy.

Another reason President Obama is off to an inauspicious start is that he doesn't understand the nature of warriors. He recently flew to North Carolina to address the Marines he is sending to Afghanistan. His subject was withdrawing from Iraq, and his remarks and tone might have been appropriate for, say, the Council on Foreign Relations. He told the troops they "got the job done" by removing Saddam Hussein and establishing a sovereign government. He then dwelled on the theme of loss. He said the Marines had "endured tour after tour," "bled for your best friends," and "borne an enormous burden." He used the word "sacrifice" repeatedly, portraying the warriors as victims rather than as the strongest tribe. He concluded by saying, "Thanks to the sacrifices of those who have served, we have forged hard-earned progress."

Progress? Our troops won in Iraq, al-Qaeda lost, and a democratic government emerged. That merits more than a nod toward "progress." The Marines respectfully listening were primed for the fight; they intend to kill Taliban, not to be killed. Warriors want to be praised for winning, not consoled for being battered. Asked after the speech what he expected the troops to accomplish, Obama replied that our goals were not clear and that a strategy was being devised: "We've seen a sense of drift in the mission in Afghanistan . . . what kinds of strategies and tactics we need to put in place. I don't think we've thought it through."

On the *NewsHour* in late February, Jim Lehrer asked President Obama to define victory in Afghanistan. Obama replied: "The achievable goal is to make sure it's not a safe haven for terrorists, to make sure that the Afghan people are able to determine their own fate . . . My goal is to get U.S. troops home as quickly as possible without leaving a situation that allows for potential attacks against the United States."

Provided Pakistan doesn't collapse, containing the insurgency inside Afghanistan seems achievable. We know, based on Iraq, that the counterinsurgency strategy works. We know that the surge of American forces will push the Taliban back. We know Afghan forces will be trained and expanded. We don't know, however, if our society will remain united in support of the war year after year, or if Congress will provide the funding. Much depends our commander-in-chief.

For the time being, Obama's leadership in foreign policy will revolve around Afghanistan—what he has called "the war that has to be won." Troops have been dispatched and a minimalist budget has been proposed. Obama has promised to unveil his strategy at the NATO meeting in April. What does Obama think "winning" means in this context? The ghost of Vince Lombardi will be listening with interest, as will 90,000 U.S. and NATO European soldiers. **NR**

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The Long View

BY ROB LONG

TO: nancy.pelosi@houserep.gov
FROM: staffer@speakersoffice.gov
RE: AIG bonuses pushback

Madam Speaker:

Need to arrange a conference call soon about the new AIG employee-bonus controversy. We're getting lots of poll data showing big traction—people really are getting angry about it, about these big companies getting taxpayer dollars and not changing their old, greedy ways. Our pollsters think this is a great time to move on health care, etc.

When can we schedule a conference call?

TO: staffer@speakersoffice.gov
FROM: nancy.pelosi@houserep.gov
RE: RE: AIG bonuses pushback

When can we schedule a conference call??? You tell me!!!! I'm right now in the least comfortable G5 jet the Air Force has got—the icemaker is totally making an annoying noise, and the seats go back flat, but there's like this little bump in the middle that's making me crazy!!! Plus, no moisturizer in the bathroom. And the nuts aren't salty at ALL which I know is because of Senator Byrd's low-salt diet but HELLO! I am not Senator Byrd!!! I want some salty nuts and the cheese thing they used to do, plus the moisturizer plus the seat that goes all the way back plus those wonderful throws they used to give out.

Handle this ASAP!!! Then we'll talk about corporate greed.

TO: concierge@armedforcesairline.gov
FROM: staffer@speakersoffice.gov
RE: A very angry speaker

Hi . . . I just got a pretty angry e-mail from Speaker Pelosi. She's on one of your G5s to the West Coast, and she's got her family there and a few other folks, and she's reporting some VERY shoddy service, and a TOTAL lack of the usual amenities you guys are really supposed to deliver: the seats, the cashmere throws, the salty nuts, etc., etc. I can't tell you how disappointed she is in this. And I also hate to remind you that when it comes to defense appropriations, etc.—new weapons systems, new protective armor, etc.—she's going to have a hard time overlooking the lack of Kiehl's moisturizer in the bathroom of the G5. And understandably so. Can you please fix this ASAP, so I can tell her it's all being taken care of? Thanks much.

TO: staffer@speakersoffice.gov
FROM: concierge@armedforcesairline.gov
RE: RE: A very angry speaker

Thanks very much for your recent e-mail about our customer service on an in-transit G5 flight.

We at the United States Armed Forces Platinum Travel Experience Office strive to meet every expectation of our discerning and demanding customers. They work hard; they play hard; they deserve the very best the United States Armed Forces can offer. We're sincerely sorry for any discomfort or distress our lack of attention to detail has caused. Please accept our apologies.

To recap, the issues with the current in-transit flight are:

1. Lack of Kiehl's moisturizer in main bathroom.
2. Insufficient pitch to one or more seats.
3. Lack of cashmere throws.
4. Lack of salted snacks.

Please rest assured that we've already begun to remedy this. An F-14 "Tomcat" fighter jet is already dispatched to the G5's destination, and will meet the Speaker upon landing to offer an official in-person apology, and a "Forgive Us! There's a War On!" amenity bag, which will include not only several cashmere throws and a carton of salty snacks, but also coupons for further travel, and a lifetime membership in the "Armed Forces Global Plus Travel Experience"™ club.

We do everything we can to make flying and travel a joyful, spa-like experience for our friends and supporters in the United States House of Representatives and the United States Senate. Thank you, sincerely, for bringing it to our attention when we fail to meet our own high expectations, and those of our valued guests.

All the very best,

Your Armed Forces Platinum Travel Experience Concierge

TO: nancy.pelosi@houserep.gov
FROM: staffer@speakersoffice.gov
RE: RE: RE: AIG bonuses pushback

Just e-mailed the guy from Concierge service at the Dept. Defense. He's on it, I promise. They're going to meet you in Marin with an "I'm sorry" and a goodie bag. And I'm pretty sure they're going to retire that plane and replace it with one of the ones we confiscate from AIG or BankAmerica or GM or Citi.

TO: staffer@speakersoffice.gov
FROM: nancy.pelosi@houserep.gov
RE: RE: RE: RE: AIG bonuses pushback

Okay then. Let's move on. What do we do about this corporate greed and all of the fat cats getting bonuses and perks and whatnot? I agree that this is a big issue. At a time when most Americans are tightening their belts, this kind of thing is just outrageous, especially in light of all of the taxpayer money going into these companies.

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The Truth Of Chile

MARK FALCOFF

One of the most unfortunate aspects of American book publishing is the extremely limited scope it provides for works translated from foreign languages. We speak here not just of Chinese, Arabic, or Afrikaans, but of a tongue far closer to us in every sense—Spanish. Although it is the second most widely spoken Western language after our own, one that generates a vast and sophisticated literary output, American book buyers and reviewers are afforded only a very limited sample. The reason for this is simple: Most editors at American publishing houses cannot read Spanish (or, for that matter, probably any other foreign language). They make their decisions on what books to order in translation based wholly on recommendations from outside readers who are native speakers, normally expatriate academics in the foreign-language departments of American universities. In most cases these professors are left of center politically (not infrequently, very far left of center). The result is that a curtain of informal censorship combined with an old-boy/old-girl network—presumably rationalized by the publishers as strictly commercial considerations—deprives us of some of the most interesting novels being published south of the border.

A case in point is the work of Roberto Ampuero, one of Chile's most original and interesting novelists. He is best known to readers in his own country as the creator of Cayetano Brulé, a Cuban-Chilean detective whose office is a shabby warren of small rooms in the old quarter of the romantic port town of Valparaíso. Together with his Japanese-Chilean assistant, Suzuki, and his lady friend Margarita (who runs a domestic-service agency), Brulé takes on cases—particularly murders with a political twist—that the local police have either ignored or dismissed as unworthy of further investigation. Margarita is particularly well placed to help Brulé, because in Chile servants are often matchless sources of information, not just about their employers but about their employers' friends and associates.

In Latin America as in many other parts of the world, fiction is often the most accurate source of contemporary history. In Ampuero's detective novels—six of them so far, all of which take place in post-Pinochet Chile—the author peels back, layer by layer, the ambiguous moral legacy bequeathed by his country's recent past. The government of Marxist president Salvador Allende (1970–73) dreamed of transforming one of Latin America's oldest democracies into something like East Germany or the Soviet Union. After three turbulent years it was ousted by a military government (1973–88) that aspired to create a Chilean version of Franco's Spain. Fortunately both efforts came to naught, but the country's almost unimaginably peaceful political transition has exacted its own form of amnesia; many inconvenient memories have been unceremoniously swept under the rug. In Ampuero's novels Chileans get their country's unwritten history, the non-official story, so to speak. He points out, in his first book, *Who Killed Cristián Kustermann?*, that some longstanding political scores are also being settled privately—in this particular case, between elements of the violent Left that have never made their peace with the country's return to "bourgeois" democracy.

Though Brulé's investigations often take the reader into the sinister districts of Valparaíso or Chile's nearby capital, Santiago, his work takes him mainly abroad—to Germany, Sweden, Cuba, Kenya, Mexico, Miami, Chicago, and Washington, places where Ampuero himself has lived or traveled. Chileans are a people hungry for contact with the outside world—their country is an isolated tranche of land separated from Argentina by the high Andes and from Peru and Bolivia by the Atacama desert. To the west there lies the limitless Pacific Ocean. Not surprisingly, then, Ampuero's familiarity with places normally beyond the reach of his readers accounts for much of his popularity. For foreigners who have lived in Chile (the present writer included) they provide a new and different way of viewing the world.

Because they are entertaining as well as politically provocative, the Brulé cycle of detective novels—*Who Killed Cristián Kustermann?*, *Boleros in Havana*, *The German from Atacama*, *Trip to the Blue Deep*, *Nighthawks*, and *The Neruda Case* (published this year in Chile and Spain)—have made Ampuero his country's second most widely read novelist after Isabel Allende. Together his books have sold more than 220,000 copies in a country of 16 million (in the U.S., the equivalent would be more than 3 million). They have also found readers in many other languages—not just Portuguese, Italian, and Spanish, but French, German, Greek, Serbian and Croatian, and even Mandarin. (I am preparing an English translation.) Moreover, another 200,000 copies may have been sold in pirated editions, in all probability produced clandestinely by old apparatchiks of the Chilean Communist party. As in the case of Portugal, Greece, and, until fairly recently, Italy, in Chile the Communists—having lost out in the struggle for political power after the end of a right-wing dictatorship—have regrouped to occupy a disproportionate role in the cultural realm. They exert a strong influence on official culture and control almost all the literary prizes. They also do what they can through their international connections to advance "their" novelists and poets. (One such—a party functionary of no known literary merit—was thrust forward at the Havana Book Fair during the recent state visit of Chilean president Michelle Bachelet.) Pirated editions of Ampuero's books are produced, most likely on presses acquired by the Communists through financial compensation for properties seized during the Pinochet years.

This illicit traffic would appear to be inspired not only by commercial considerations, however. There are scores to be settled. The Chilean party has this writer in its sights.

Mr. Falcoff is resident scholar emeritus at the American Enterprise Institute and author of Modern Chile, 1970–1989: A Critical History and Cuba the Morning After: Confronting Castro's Legacy.

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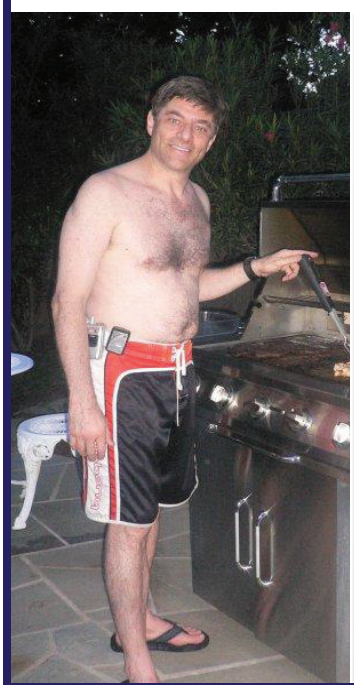

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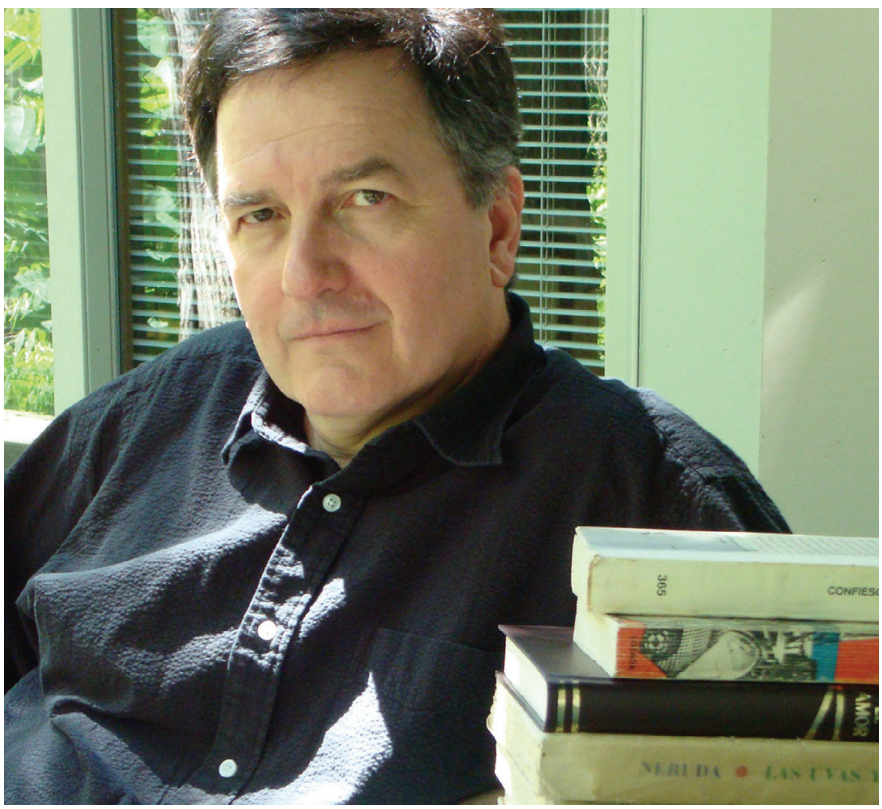
At the time of the coup that deposed Allende in 1973, Ampuero, then 20 years of age, was a Communist student leader at the University of Chile. After some months in hiding from the police and the military, he was spirited out of the country to the German Democratic Republic. The choice of destination was logical, not only because of the intense relationship between the Chilean Communists and their "fraternal party" in East Berlin, but because Ampuero was already fluent in the language, having graduated from the German School of his native Valparaíso.

While living in Leipzig, Ampuero met and fell in love with a beautiful young Cuban woman whose father held a key post in the Castro regime. The two were eventually married in Havana, where Ampuero settled into life as a student of literature at the University. For four years he lived with his in-laws in a mansion in one of the "frozen zones" of Havana—that is to say, in one of the elite residential districts restricted to the Cuban *nomenklatura*. When his marriage broke up, he was forced to move out and live like an ordinary Cuban. The experience was a revelation to him—as if he had moved to another country. For three years he survived by doing translation work or teaching German to Cuban workers conscripted for work in East Germany. It was extraordinarily difficult for Chileans who had taken refuge in Cuba to leave the island—as it is for Cubans themselves—but Ampuero finally managed, thanks to connections with the Chilean Social Democrat Left, to find his way back to East Germany. After slightly more than two years there he crossed over the Berlin Wall to the West, where he remained for twelve years as a journalist. It was in West Germany that he met his present wife, who was serving as Guatemalan ambassador to Bonn.

All of the events just related—up to the moment of his crossing to the West—form the basis of a remarkable autobiographical novel, *Our Olive Green Years*, published in both Chile and Spain in 1999, and last year in an Italian translation. This book is a classic of political disenchantment, comparable in some ways to Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*, with the important difference that the story stretches out over a long period of time and takes place in three countries. It begins with an uninspiring picture of "Democratic" Germany—the beau ideal of the Chilean Left—before flashing back to the horrific events following the Pinochet coup in Chile, and then moves forward to a detailed description of life in Castro's Cuba (the dictator even makes a cameo appearance—just as he did in real life at Ampuero's in-laws'). Even more interesting is the description of the politics of the Chilean exile community in Cuba, dominated by power-hungry pseudo-revolutionary bureaucrats. Above all, he captures the deep hunger of ordinary Cubans for an existence that does not continually call for conflict and sacrifice. As he puts it in one of the unforgettable passages of the book:

> During December nights . . . the sky became cloudy and the atmosphere thicker, making it possible to pick up U.S. [television] transmissions. . . . Thousands of people in the neighborhood were glued to their sets until morning for the sheer pleasure of watching blurred, soundless images of a world as close as it was unattainable . . . a world which, between endless lines and periodic fog on the screen, offered in apparently limitless supply oversized hamburgers with Coca-Cola, shoes, pants, and skirts of the latest fashion, amusement parks, automobiles with shiny chrome bumpers, apartments with air conditioning on Collins Avenue in Miami Beach. . . . Finally, morning came, and the American ghosts on the screen were chased away by the first transmissions of Cuban television, with a brisk wake-up call from the revolutionary version of the news. [My translation.]



Roberto Ampuero

FOTOARS

Appearing as it did at a time when Chile was still in recovery from the Allende experience—and coming from a writer who himself was a former member of the Communist party—*Our Olive Green Years* had an enormous impact on the Chilean Left and the country's intellectual community. It has sold at least 45,000 copies (probably an equal number in pirated editions) and provoked an enormous debate on the meaning of "actually existing socialism" in a country where distant Marxist models had possessed an unwholesome, but long-lasting, appeal. Although prohibited in Cuba, it has circulated clandestinely on the island and someday will represent to readers there something like what *The Gulag Archipelago* represented to Russians. Roosfilms is making plans to film it, probably in Cartagena, Colombia, where the backgrounds can be made to resemble Havana.

Today, Ampuero and his wife Ana Lucrecia and their two children live in

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Iowa City, Iowa, where he teaches Spanish and creative writing at the University of Iowa. In addition to his work as a novelist, he has become a major public intellectual in Chile. His commentaries appear every other Sunday in that country's major daily, *La Tercera*. Something of a moderate Social Democrat, he has been repeatedly offered the opportunity to figure on a list of candidates for the Chilean congress but chosen to remain in the United States.

In no way has this distance isolated him from events in his home country, to which he often returns. A few weeks ago he caused a sensation by publishing an open letter to President Bachelet on the occasion of her visit to Cuba. This was one of a series of pilgrimages that democratically elected Latin American leaders somewhat inexplicably feel obliged to make to the island during the 50th anniversary year of the Castro revolution. Madame Bachelet thought to make the trip somewhat shamefacedly—during the month when most of Chile's elite and political class were on holiday. Unfortunately for her, the event did not go unnoticed, particularly thanks to Ampuero's article.

He was particularly incensed by her decision to open the Havana Book Fair. This, Ampuero wrote, in a country "where censorship is the order of the day, and hundreds of intellectuals—Vargas Llosa or Semprún, Zoé Valdés or Daína Chaviano, Arenas or Cabrera Infante, Padilla or Paquito D'Rivera, among others—are proscribed." He reminded President Bachelet of her own political past as a prisoner of dictatorship, and asked her: "If for Chileans, seventeen years without freedom was far too long, why are fifty years for Cubans not yet sufficient?" "Some facts are undeniable," he concluded, "After a half century of totalitarianism in Cuba, brutal repression against all opposition, a controlled press, political prisoners, 8,000 political executions (that have been documented thus far), massive exile, a country in ruins . . . Let no one say later, *'Oh, if only we had known!'*"

Could there be a connection between this disposition to call things by their proper names, and the fact that Anglophone readers have not yet been given the opportunity to enjoy the adventures of Cayetano Brulé? One hopes not. But knowing what one knows about the New York publishing world, one can never be sure. **NR**

Golden Idyll

MEGHAN COX GURDON

When Charles Scribner was shown a copy of the manuscript that would become *The Wind in the Willows*, he experienced a sense of profound disappointment. This wasn't at all, he felt, what American readers would want from Kenneth Grahame, the noted English writer of essays. The bucolic adventures of Ratty, Mole, and Mr. Toad were, moreover, "altogether lacking in human interest," Scribner wrote in a rejection letter to Grahame's agent.

Amazingly, Scribner seems to have been brought to his senses by no less a literary critic than Theodore Roosevelt. Grahame knew the American president had enjoyed his earlier work, so he had sent Roosevelt a typed manuscript of what was then titled *The Mole and the Water Rat*. Roosevelt read it, loved it, and, according to Grahame's agent, told the reluctant publisher that, "it was such a beautiful thing that Scribner must publish it."

So it was that in October 1908, almost simultaneously in the U.S. and in the U.K. (where Grahame had gotten a similarly tepid reaction from his British publisher), one of the most beloved children's books, ever, arrived in shops. *The Wind in the Willows* was an immediate and roaring success, proving wrong the glum assessments of its first publishers.

It has been enriching publishers ever since. Indeed, two beautiful new annotated versions of the book are coming out this spring, tied to Kenneth Grahame's 150th birthday on March 8. The anecdote about Teddy Roosevelt's literary midwifery appears in Annie Gauger's preface to *The Annotated Wind in the Willows*, due in April from W. W. Norton. In May, Belknap Press will issue *The Wind in the Willows: An Annotated Edition*, edited by Seth Lerer.

For those who don't know the book, *The Wind in the Willows* recounts the

Meghan Cox Gurdon writes regularly about children's books for the Wall Street Journal.

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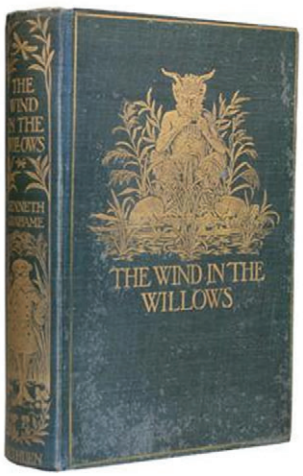
friendship between a mole and a boat-loving water rat, their joint adventures along a river and amongst the alarming inhabitants of the Wild Wood, and the scrapes and exploits of their conceited, impulsive, rich, heedless, affectionate, boastful, and energetic friend, Mr. Toad of Toad Hall. As that description may suggest, the story is one that meanders along pleasantly and then explodes into drama and witty pathos when Toady appears.

While the other animals exhibit steady characters, Toad is a wild serial enthusiast. He flings himself and his fortune at whatever enraptures him and pursues it furiously to the exclusion of all else. When some fresh curiosity catches his eye, he drops the old obsession and immediately picks up the new one with equal zeal.

When we meet him, he's been through a boating phase (leaving a boathouse crammed with handsome, disused vessels) and is now smitten by what he explains to Ratty and Mole is "the real thing, the only genuine occupation for a life time. I propose to devote the remainder of mine to it, and can only regret the wasted years that lie behind me, squandered in trivialities."



This turns out to be a horse-drawn caravan, embodying "the open road, the dusty highway, the heath, the common, the hedgerows, the rolling downs!" Toad raves, "Here to-day, up and off to somewhere else to-morrow! Travel, change, interest, excitement! The whole world before you, and a horizon that's always changing!"

Yes, well: This infatuation lasts only as long as it takes Toad to encounter, on that open road, a motorcar. Now he is utterly ensorcelled, and from his passionate infatuation with automobiles will come a long series of disastrous and rockingly funny episodes that are the crowning joy of the book.

> "And to think I never *knew*!" [says] the Toad in a dreamy monotone. "All those wasted years that lie behind me, I never knew, never even *dreamt*! But *now*—but now that I know, now that I fully realise! O what a flowery track lies spread before me, henceforth! What dust-clouds shall spring up behind me as I speed on my reckless way! What carts I shall fling carelessly into the ditch in the wake of my magnificent onset!"

Toad is a brilliant character, as much a man for the Edwardian setting of the book as he is a man for today. If he were a man today, he would probably be managing a hedge fund very badly. In fact, he's the sort of fellow who might, without meaning to do anything actually wrong, construct a splendid Ponzi scheme, the wickedness of which would become obvious to him only when the thing fell apart and his old friends were remonstrating with him amidst the ruins (though he might not be entirely contrite). If the general run of *The Wind in the Willows* exudes a kind of gentle, pastoral glow, the bits with Toady in them sparkle like a cut-crystal chandelier.

And this raises questions that are worth asking, on a nice round anniversary such as Grahame's 150th birthday or the just-passed centennial of his most famous work. Does *The Wind in the Willows* still hold together as a wonderful read? Should we continue to press it on our children?

Time is passing, tastes are changing, and the turn of the 19th century is receding. Are adults who love the book mostly living on the love of things that previous generations formed for us? Or do we love it because it is a masterwork, and we simply recognize, as our parents and grandparents did, that the book is so good that no subsequent generation should grow up without it?

I think it is fair to say that *The Wind in the Willows* remains a genuine classic, without which no one can emerge from childhood with complete cultural literacy. It's not so fundamental as a fairy tale; Toad's deceits, funny as they are, don't rank alongside Cinderella or Rapunzel for resonance or durability. Nor does it mark a child an ignoramus not to know that it was Ratty who famously said there is "*nothing*—absolute nothing—half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats." Yet Kenneth Grahame's idyll nonetheless belongs in that quirky canon of books that are essential furnishings in the mind of the educated child.

On the same shelf you would find, inter alia, Astrid Lindgren's *Pippi Longstocking*, E. B. White's *Charlotte's Web*, and C. S. Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. It's no crime to dislike any of them, but not to know them is to have gaps in one's knowledge. By now, probably, J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter series is on that shelf. Others, like books by the magnificent E. Nesbit, are, as the decades whip by, gently being nudged off it. Arriving in the canon of children's greats does not mean staying there forever.

Also sliding towards perishability are Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*. Both are quirky books—aspects of *Peter Pan* are seriously weird—and neither works well anymore as an at-home read-aloud for young children. By the time the modern American child is capable of reading either on his own, his tastes are likely to be, if not jaded, then perhaps not wholly in alignment with these books' quaint surrealism. In both cases, the child has probably already had his conception of the characters formed by Walt Disney, which will make an encounter with the real, more taxing stories even more daunting. Children still need to know these tales; they do not really need to read them.

The Wind in the Willows is much warmer and funnier, but it shares with those other British stalwarts the vulnerability of language that is, to modern tastes, sometimes overly rose-scented, like an old lady's perfume.

Half the pleasure of Grahame's story is the way he writes it; his descriptions of nature, at their best, get at its beauty with delightful precision. Much loved and quoted, for example, is this early passage in which Mole throws off spring cleaning, strikes out on a walk, and suddenly finds himself at the edge of a river: "Never in his life had he seen a river before—this sleek, sinuous, full-bodied animal, chasing and chuckling, gripping things with a gurgle and leaving them with a laugh, to fling itself on fresh playmates that shook themselves free, and were caught and held again."

It is a lovely, memorable description. But Grahame's portrayals are not always

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so economical. Some passages pose real difficulty for the modern reader—which, for our purposes here, means a well-intentioned adult reading aloud at bedtime to a child or two (or five). Imagine getting through this without causing bewilderment in your auditors:

> The pageant of the river bank had marched steadily along, unfolding itself in scene-pictures that succeeded each other in stately procession. Purple loosestrife arrived early, shaking luxuriant tangled locks along the edge of the mirror whence its own face laughed back at it. Willow-herb, tender and wistful, like a pink sunset cloud, was not slow to follow. Comfrey, the purple hand-in-hand with the white, crept forth to take its place in the line; and at last one morning the diffident and delaying dog-rose stepped delicately on the stage, and one knew, as if string-music had announced it in stately chords that strayed into a gavotte, that June at last was here.

That passage becomes even more confusingly ornate—with a "shepherd-boy for the nymphs to woo" and "meadow-sweet, debonair and odorous in amber jerkin" and whatnot—before the actual story resumes. Halfway through a bit like that, even the most alert and cultivated child will be wondering what on earth you're on about, and wishing you'd get back to Mr. Toad.

Perhaps a century ago, British and American children were close enough to flowers and plants, and, for that matter, the gavotte, for such a passage to resonate. But we live at a faster pace now. Grahame's languid description of natural beauty—indeed, the whole experience of the book—has a kind of leisurely feeling that, like the messing about in boats, may not be immediately accessible to a generation of children raised on Wiis and iPods.

For those families who read aloud and often, there is no real question: Of course you must read *The Wind in the Willows*, and if you happen to skip the odd elaborate descriptive paragraph, well, who's to know? For those families who regard nightly read-alouds as something glimpsed in a Norman Rockwell illustration, there's an equally good option: Buy the audio version recorded by Martin Jarvis. It's gloriously first-rate, and—what do you know?—it's also abbreviated. **NR**

Music

Take Five

JAY NORDLINGER

The big musicians, most of them, blow through New York. And, usually, they come with records—CDs, recordings—sometimes signing them after the performance. We'll examine five recent performances, and CDs, to boot.

Lang Lang, the young Chinese pianist, is a puzzle: sometimes great, sometimes appalling—sometimes great and appalling at the same time. He is loaded with talent, and owns a phenomenal technique. He never plays badly; it's just that, sometimes, he thinks badly. Many people delight in sending me negative things that have been written about Lang Lang. Strangely, a high percentage of these people are pianists themselves. In any case, Lang Lang provokes strong emotions.

With the Vienna Philharmonic, under Maestro Zubin Mehta, Lang Lang played Chopin's Piano Concerto in F minor. The concert took place in Carnegie Hall. Unsurprisingly, Lang Lang did some wondrous and imaginative things, and some screwy and hard-to-defend things—over-imaginative things, you might say. Sometimes, he appears to be composing the piece on the spot. This can be fresh and persuasive. Alternatively, it can be merely willful.

What you always get is that phenomenal technique. After Lang Lang put on some liquid, lacy, subtle passagework in the second movement, a man said to his wife—in a husky whisper—"Wow." "Wow" was right.

Not to channel the dead, but I believe Chopin would have been appalled at Lang Lang's rendering of his concerto—and then intrigued, and finally appreciative. You can check out Lang Lang for yourself, for he has recorded this concerto, along with Chopin's other one, on Deutsche Grammophon. His partners are again the Vienna Phil. and Mehta.

I'll give you a little footnote about Lang Lang's Carnegie performance: One of his teachers, the octogenarian sage Gary Graffman, was looking on with pleasure and pride—maybe a little amusement as well. Lang Lang creates a bit of a circus. And there is room for that in the music

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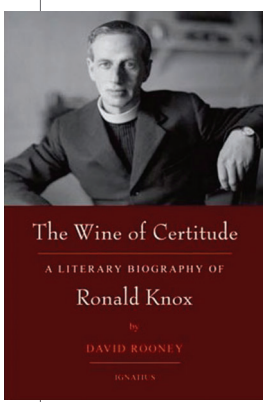
Shelf Life

One of Chesterton's most frequently quoted jokes was his answer to the question, Which book would you most want to have on a desert island? He said, "Thomas's *Guide to Practical Shipbuilding*"—and there was much of his personality in the remark: wit, of course, but also a rather obtrusively self-complimentary insistence on his own commonsensical attitude toward life.

Msgr. Ronald Knox (1888–1957)—the great man of letters and Catholic convert who became one of the leading apologists of the 20th century—was influenced by Chesterton in many ways, and his approach to the same question was likewise revealing. According to David Rooney's impressive new guide to Knox's works—***The Wine of Certitude: A Literary Biography of Ronald Knox*** (Ignatius, 427 pp., $17.95)—the book Knox wanted on the desert island was . . . a Bradshaw railway schedule. The thick "ox-Bradshaw of to-day," wrote Knox, was "that noble volume which all of us, if we thought the matter over with proper deliberation, would pack next to the Bible in our desert-island bookshelf. Nowhere else, assuredly, can Fancy roam so free; nothing else affords the same opportunity for solitary pastime." Here, too, we have a window into the writer's character: Knox was a whimsical figure whose flights of fancy were nonetheless based on a very prosaic—even donnish—attention to specific facts.



Rooney's book is focused on Knox's writings, as opposed to the details of his life; it's therefore more valuable than Evelyn Waugh's 1959 biography as an introduction to Knox's lasting achievement. Rooney quotes generously from all genres in which Knox wrote (and excelled), among them apologetics, sermons, and detective stories; the reader has a good deal of help in compiling a personal Knox reading list.

One of the book's chapters addresses Knox's most monumental undertaking—his translation of the Bible, which was published in 1944 (NT) and 1948–50 (OT). Rooney judges this work "most readable" and "successful [in] liberat[ing] the English Bible from encrusted archaisms." Knox was, in fact, an admirable stylist, and his Bible is worth reading; it's been out of print for a long time and Baronius Press is, fortunately, planning to publish a new edition soon. But I can endorse the second part of Rooney's praise only with some reservations: In his Old Testament, Knox tends to add some deliberate archaisms of his own in his choice of word order. Here are a couple of examples chosen at random. I Chr. 17:5: "House was never mine, since I rescued the sons of Israel from Egypt." (Compare KJV: "I have not dwelt in an house . . .") And Is. 65:18: "Joy of yours, pride of yours, this new creation shall be." (KJV: "But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create.") It is, as Rooney points out, in the New Testament that Knox's version really shines.

—MICHAEL POTEMRA

world—especially when the circus is occasioned by talent.

Hélène Grimaud, the French pianist, gave a recital in the 92nd St. Y (not just a place to swim, but an important concert venue). "La Belle Hélène," as I have called her, played a recital of Bach—including Bach with hyphens. That is, she played some Bach transcribed by others, in addition to straight Bach, or pure Bach. For example, she played the famous Chaconne in D minor for violin, transcribed by Busoni. We label such a transcription "Bach-Busoni"—you see what I mean by hyphens.

Not unlike Lang Lang, Grimaud did some commendable things and some deplorable things. Some of her playing was highly musical, as in Bach's C-sharp-minor fugue from *The Well-Tempered Clavier* (Book I). And some of her playing was too blunt, even offensive—as when she socked out the opening statement of another fugue (the one in A minor from Book II of the *WTC*). Could she not hear herself? Was she trying to clear the auditorium? That Busonified chaconne, she handled with genuine mastery: understanding the inner workings, but letting the work be a whole. She swept through it with the desired nobility.

Grimaud has an album, on Deutsche Grammophon, called *Bach*. It contains many of the pieces she played in New York. That Grimaud loves and reveres Bach says something very good about her. It also says something good about her that she has time for these transcriptions. Not long ago, they were considered gauche and hopelessly old-fashioned. But pianists of taste have always appreciated them.

Grimaud ends her album, as she ended her recital, with one of the most delightsome Bach transcriptions of all: the one that Rachmaninoff did of the E-major prelude for violin. Rachmaninoff played it splendidly, irresistibly. Grimaud is no Rachmaninoff. But then, who is? And she makes a contribution.

Marcelo Álvarez, the Argentinian tenor, appeared in Verdi's *Trovatore* at the Metropolitan Opera. It is not a great time for Verdi tenors. It's an excellent time for lyric tenors, considering Matthew Polenzani, Richard Croft, Michael Schade, and several others. But when it comes to the heavier tenor—someone who can give you a Manrico or an Otello—you're not exactly spoiled

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for choice. It's pretty much any port in a storm.

And Álvarez is a fair enough port. He has made an album called, straightforwardly, *The Verdi Tenor* (on Decca). It's a compilation of arias. And Álvarez has a lot going for him—chiefly voice: a beautiful, gleaming, enviable voice.

But singing is another question. Álvarez does some sliding around, some swooning around, in the familiar Latin American style. Many of these guys have followed in the wake of the great Plácido. And sometimes—good as they may be—they're more "Bésame Mucho" than "Celeste Aida." Have I just engaged in hate speech? Quite possibly—check with the Justice Department. Also, Álvarez—like Domingo and the others—sings in a heavily Spanishized Italian. The closer the languages, the more the blurring of lines, naturally. Furthermore, Álvarez does some bellowing on this album, although it can be rather beautiful bellowing, if you know what I mean.

There are people who love Álvarez, and they are not to be scorned. Besides, the world—the opera world—hath need of him: He will be hired, by the Met and other big houses, till the cows come home. And we await a better day, for Verdi.

Was it really 25 years ago that Evgeny Kissin was a boy in the Soviet Union, wearing a red Young Pioneers scarf, amazing the world with his mature Chopin? It was. Now he is a 37-year-old touring virtuoso, a "superpianist" who plays to spillover audiences: This was the case in Carnegie Hall, where a portion of the audience was seated on the stage. Kissin started with Prokofiev—excerpts from *Romeo and Juliet*. And Kissin was sadly tight, possibly nervous, pounding and thudding, getting a little tangled up. Also, he is a head-nodder: someone who nods his head as he plays. Head-nodders are almost never any good. They are usually mechanical and unmusical. Kissin may be the best head-nodding pianist who ever lived.

He continued with more Prokofiev—the Sonata No. 8 in B flat, which is fearsomely difficult and, possibly for that reason, almost never played. Kissin was masterly in it: both logical and musical, rising to the reputation he enjoys worldwide. Not to detract from his achievement, but I might say that Kissin is habitually percussive: and Prokofiev, of course, bears percussiveness relatively well. Sometimes requires it.

He has recorded the complete Beethoven concertos with Sir Colin Davis and the London Symphony Orchestra (EMI Classics). Frankly, I'm surprised that Sir Colin agreed to record the concertos with Kissin: They are quite different musicians. Kissin can be terribly harsh and blunt; Sir Colin is a model of taste. In any event, they must appreciate each other.

As the concertos unfold, Kissin does some hard, brittle, jarring playing. Unnatural and coarse accents abound. You will not likely turn to this pianist for grace and lyricism—but you may turn to him for other things: incisiveness, for example, and an interesting mind, and a certain fearlessness. As for Sir Colin—who is now 81, by the way—he is superb. And so is the LSO, which knows him so well.

Look, there is only one Cecilia Bartoli: for better or worse. And better to have her than not. This Italian mezzo-soprano does not come out of a cookie cutter; she is her own gal. And, like others we've discussed, she provokes strong emotions. Over the years, I have been in a hall with her and thought, "She's the most vulgar woman alive." Other times, I have thought, "Yeah, well: She is one of the most talented women alive." La Bartoli is often over-the-top, cartoonish; but then she can be perfectly convincing, beyond criticism.

She gave a concert in Carnegie Hall, centered around her new album, *Maria* (Decca). Maria who? Callas? No, Maria Malibran, another legendary singer, but this one from an earlier period: 1808 to 1836 (brief span). And what did Bartoli sing? Music associated with Malibran—including pieces by the legend herself.

Bartoli was as good as I have ever heard her, absolutely at the top of her game. The technique was sovereign, homemade as it is. The expression was marvelous—hammy, at times, but marvelous. Bartoli's is a big, big personality: so big that you can forget that her voice is rather small. And opera makes room for personalities, does it not? If opera doesn't, what field does?

I will give you one detail, or rather, mention one piece: Bartoli did things to "Non più mesta"—Rossini's showstopper from *La Cenerentola*—that I had never thought of. And, from the most dazzling mezzos, you hear practically every interpolation. Bartoli creates a circus, but it is a glorious circus, more than justified.

In the old days, when she first came on the scene, I liked to quote a pop song: "Cecilia, you're breaking my heart, you're shaking my confidence daily." She does not really do that anymore. Who's changed? Has she become more mature, musically, or am I more accepting of her? Both things are probably true. I will miss her when she's gone, and so will music. Music does not suffer from that hotshot Chinese pianist, either. **NR**

FROM *SONNETS FROM THE DARK LADY*

24.

"The more I hear and see just cause of hate . . ."

The more I hear and see just cause of hate
Within this wanting world, the more I see
Just cause to warranty at bargain rate
My comprehension, credit, sympathy.
I cannot be all things to all, but this
I take into consideration when
Perfection would betray me with a kiss
And leave me with a heretic *Amen*:
That if I condescend to that which wants—
Deficiency and Want themselves are truth,
And self-conceit a paltry vice to daunt
For a word which in our language rhymes with "youth."
Time is a tick's infection whence we die.
We may as well be humble, you and I.

—JENNIFER REESER

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Film

Who Will Watch Them?

ROSS DOUTHAT

I'm not sure whether to be glad or sorry that I buckled down and read Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons's *Watchmen*, the mid-1980s graphic novel that looms over the genre like the Colossus over Rhodes, before I saw the movie. I'm glad because I went in with some sense of the baggage that the comic book's committed fans carried into Zack Snyder's big-screen version—and that Snyder himself doubtless carried into the work of adaptation. I'm also glad because

Nite Owl (Patrick Wilson)

WARNER BROS.

having read the book guaranteed that I would understand roughly what the heck was going on. But I'm sorry because it robbed me of the chance to experience the film the way most of its audience will experience it: not as the much-anticipated adaptation of a beloved work of art, but as a would-be blockbuster aimed at the same kind of pop-cultural sweet spot as *E.T.*, or *Indiana Jones*, or last summer's *Dark Knight*.

My suspicion is that if you walked in with those expectations, you'd walk out mystified by what you'd just spent two hours and forty minutes sitting through. Most successful blockbusters trade on a single big "what if?" What if an alien landed in your backyard? What if the Nazis were after the Ark of the Covenant? What if a man dressed up as a bat to fight crime? Try to write the same one-liner for *Watchmen*, though, and you end up with something like this: *What if the year were 1985, but in an alternative timeline that diverged from ours in the 1940s, when people starting dressing up in costumes to fight crime—and what if a fluke nuclear accident in the alternative-timeline 1959 created a genuine superman who contributed to an American victory in Vietnam, which in turn led to Richard Nixon's being reelected four times and a constantly escalating arms race—and what if by the time the Eighties rolled around New York were filled with semi-retired superheroes, all of them either depressed, impotent, megalomaniacal, or some combination thereof?*

That's the load of bricks that Snyder's film drops on the unsuspecting moviegoer. *Watchmen* is set in an alternative version of an era that's 25 years gone, featuring superheroes you've never heard of (Ozymandias? Rorschach? The Nite Owl?) indulging in various kinds of R-rated conduct, with occasional cutaways to scenes of escalating nuclear brinkmanship between the U.S. and Soviet Russia and a finale that turns every superhero-movie convention on its head. "Welcome to a world without rules," *The Dark Knight*'s tagline ran, but that film never *really* broke the mold. Underneath Heath Ledger's Nietzschean sermonizing was a fairly conventional superhero plot, larded with a little more suffering than usual but still following the basic comic-book rules. *Watchmen*, on the other hand, really does upend your expectations of what a superhero movie should be—with Tarantino-esque violence, full frontal nudity, and the kind of horrific mass murder that a more conventional comic-book story often threatens but never, ever actually delivers.

Rule-breaking is to be encouraged where comic-book conventions are concerned, especially in an era that's glutted with superhero flicks. But that doesn't mean the results are automatically pretty. There are things to admire about *Watchmen*: The bravura opening-credits sequence, which fills the audience in on 40 years of alternative history with a swift parade of arresting images and scenes; game performances from Patrick Wilson (the gone-to-seed Nite Owl, a Batman-lite with a potbelly) and Billy Crudup (the mournful, blue-skinned, semi-omnipotent Dr. Manhattan), and a great one from Jackie Earle Haley as the vengeful vigilante Rorschach; and a screenplay that partakes of the same ambitious fidelity to difficult source material that made Peter Jackson's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy such a success.

But these strengths aren't enough to save the movie from being an interesting misfire. Some of the casting decisions hurt—particularly Malin Akerman's unfortunate turn as Silk Spectre II, which invests the film's only major female character with all the verve and depth of a bored extra on *Gossip Girl*. But the director's abiding hackishness hurts even more. Snyder's Spartan epic *300*, whose massive box-office numbers won him the chance to take on *Watchmen*, was the kind of movie best viewed drunk with your college buddies at 2:00 A.M. He's improved on that effort, but his sensibility is still essentially adolescent—straining to be grown-up, but not quite getting there. He ratchets up the carnage in a story that was bloody enough on the page, over-aestheticizing every gouge and punch and blood-splatter. And the rest of his flourishes tend to be either risible (an extended airborne sex scene set to Leonard Cohen's "Hallelujah") or thuddingly obvious—"Ride of the Valkyries" playing over a Vietnam scene, Nixon and Kissinger plotting in the war-room set from *Dr. Strangelove*, and so forth.

The deepest problem, though, is the datedness of the source material. Like many Reagan-era dystopias, from Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* to Alan Moore's own *V for Vendetta*, *Watchmen* the comic book drew a lot of its dramatic oomph from anxieties and paranoias that look somewhat less frightening in hindsight. (As it turns out, a Republican-led America *wasn't* on an irreversible course toward nuclear war.) Judging by Hollywood's War on Terror cinema to date, it's almost certainly a good thing that Snyder kept the 1980s setting, rather than trying to update the story for the post-9/11 age. But there's still an air of mothballs about the whole production—like a rigorously faithful Civil War reenactment, or a meticulous waxworks exhibition. If you aren't already passionately invested in the material, *Watchmen* feels impressive without being immersive: It sometimes inspires admiration, but never inspires love. **NR**

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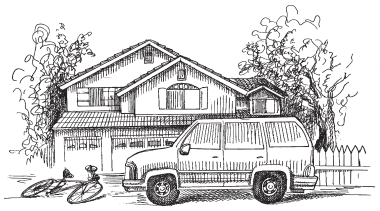
The Straggler

Shooting Like a Gentleman



JOHN DERBYSHIRE

THE luckiest bird in the world lives in a wood near Reading, Pa. He popped up out of the tall grass 30 yards in front of me. "Popped" isn't quite right. These were farm-bred pheasants, well-fed and not much keen on flying. They had been scattered around the 40-odd acres of grass early that morning, before we arrived. This particular bird was one of the more energetic ones, though, and he was up above head height before I'd gotten the gun to my shoulder. I fired off a shot, which comprehensively missed. The bird took off to my right. Tracking him, I worked the action and fired again, missing again. There wasn't even the consolatory feather or two drifting down.

The four of us were in extended line across the field, I at the left-hand end. That charmed bird proceeded to fly straight across the front of the line at about the same distance, but gaining height laboriously with his farm-fattened wings. My three companions—one of them an experienced hunter—each in turn fired at him, but he got away and disappeared into the woods at our right, having survived eight or ten bursts of shot.

At the risk of violating the Excuse Rule (which is: No excuses!), I at least can plead rookie status—this was my first bird shoot—and an unfamiliar borrowed gun. I am handicapped, too, by gun-safety neurosis. I was introduced to target shooting at age 13 by instructors who were, understandably, very nervous indeed at finding themselves in charge of a platoon of giggling adolescents armed with rifles. They hammered the safety rules relentlessly into our silly heads, supplementing the instruction with Ministry of Defence movies portraying, with staggering gruesomeness, the consequences of mishandling guns and explosives. Full of the ghoulish instincts normal among early-teen boys, we enjoyed the gory movies as much as we did the shooting, but we got the point.

The effect of these stern early lessons on one's adult field-shooting skills is analogous to the result Freud ascribed to over-rigorous potty training. The dog points; the grass moves; a bird comes up. *Okay, where's the damn safety on this thing? Got it. Now, where'd the dog go? There he is. Where's Tom? I see him. Where's Vin? Got him. Where's Randy? Over there, right. Great, now where's the bird?* In birdie heaven by this time, that's where, with a good measure of my companions' shot in him. I felt like Mr. Winkle in *The Pickwick Papers*.

> Bang, bang, went a couple of guns;—the smoke swept quickly away over the field, and curled into the air.
>
> "Where are they?" said Mr. Winkle, in a state of the highest excitement, turning round and round in all directions. "Where are they? Tell me when to fire. Where are they—where are they?"
>
> "Where are they?" said Wardle, taking up a brace of birds which the dogs had deposited at his feet. "Why, here they are."

So far as fictional descriptions of field sports go, by far the most inhibiting scene for the beginner is the one at the end of Alan Bridges's classic 1985 movie *The Shooting Party*. Lord Gilbert Hartlip, the best shot in England, is secretly competing with young Lionel Stephens—secretly, because competition is unsporting in these pre-WWI aristocratic circles. (Earlier in the movie His Lordship had been caught—oh horror!—*practicing*.) He shoots out of turn at a low-flying bird, fatally wounding one of the beaters. "You were not shooting like a gentleman, Gilbert," growls the furious host, played by James Mason. It was one of Mason's last roles; and, I have always thought, one of his best.

Incompetent or not, I hope I at least shot like a gentleman. Standards in these matters have of course changed since 1913. We heard something of this from our guide, a local fellow possessed of a great love for his dogs and an abundance of riveting stories about the endless hours he spends training them for the field. What he did not have much love for was cell phones. He told us of some doctors he had taken out shooting: "And we're out here, the dog spots a bird, and I turn to the doctor, and he's on his cell phone giving out a prescription! And I'm saying 'Look! The dog's pointing!' and the damn fool doctor's *talking into his damn cell phone!*"

Our guide had only one dog to help us on this outing, a handsome Brittany spaniel of supernatural stamina. We traversed those fields for three and a half hours, covering perhaps four miles altogether at a middle-aged slow walk. The dog was tacking back and forth at a run in front of us the whole time when not pointing. He must have run ten miles at least, and it was a warm day. I thought darkly of my own pampered pooch, who, after a leisurely breakfast, saunters round our suburban block, and snoozes for the rest of the day. Well, well, there are dogs for use, and dogs for companionship, I suppose.

"There's a Cabela's in Hamburg," one of my companions mentioned over lunch, naming a nearby town. "Have you ever seen one?" I said I hadn't, so we took in the Cabela's on our way home. Cabela's, in case you are as ignorant as I was, is a national chain of country-sports megastores—everything for the hunter, fisherman, camper, and gun enthusiast.

What a store! The product lines are impressive enough—from black powder to GPS gizmos, from crossbows to collapsible camper's toilets—but the star attraction at the Hamburg store was an artificial indoor mountain with, all over its slopes, stuffed wildlife that would do credit to a natural-history museum: bears, wolves, deer, lions. There was a big indoor pond, too, home to several handsome trout (real, not stuffed).

The customers, I couldn't help noticing, were all old-stock Americans—a crowd of faces you could have cast a Civil War movie from. "Not a Democrat in the whole place," murmured one of my friends. Probably not true: I'm sure there are still unionized working-class Americans whose faith in the Party of the Little Guy has survived every round of shot in the arsenal of the modern Left—financial corruption, open borders, race favoritism, elitist sneering—and who still, on weekends, make it to a haven in the woods, like that blithe bird I missed. **NR**

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Happy Warrior

BY MARK STEYN

Old School

In his not–quite–State of the Union address the other week, President Obama said the following: "I think about Ty'Sheoma Bethea, the young girl from that school I visited in Dillon, South Carolina—a place where the ceilings leak, the paint peels off the walls, and they have to stop teaching six times a day because the train barrels by their classroom. She had been told that her school is hopeless, but the other day after class she went to the public library and typed up a letter to the people sitting in this chamber. She even asked her principal for the money to buy a stamp. The letter asks us for help, and says, 'We are just students trying to become lawyers, doctors, congressmen like yourself and one day president, so we can make a change to not just the state of South Carolina but also the world. We are not quitters.' That's what she said. 'We are not quitters.'"

There was much applause, and this passage was cited approvingly even by some conservatives as an example of how President Obama was yoking his "ambitious vision" (i.e., record-breaking spending) to traditional appeals to American exceptionalism.

I think not. "We are just students trying to become lawyers, doctors, congressmen . . ." The doctors are on track to becoming yet another group of state employees; the lawyers sue the doctors for medical malpractice and, when they've made enough dough, like John Edwards, they get elected to Congress. Is there no one in Miss Bethea's school who'd like to be an entrepreneur, an inventor, a salesman, a generator of wealth? *Someone*'s got to make the dough Obama's already spent.

The issue is not the decrepitude of the building but the decrepitude of liberty.

As for the train "barreling by their classroom," my colleague John Derbyshire checked. The closest the railroad track comes to the school is about 240 yards, or over an eighth of a mile. The president was wrong: Trains are not barreling by any classroom six times a day. And, even if they were, I'll bet that's fewer barrelings per diem than when the school was built in 1912, or the new wing added in 1957. Incidentally, you may have read multiple articles referring to the "113-year-old building." Actually, that's the building *behind* the main school—the original structure from 1896, where the school district has its offices. But if, like so many people, you assume an edifice dating from 1896 or 1912 must ipso facto be uninhabitable, bear in mind that the central portion of the main building was entirely rebuilt in 1983. That's to say, this rotting, decrepit, mildewed Dotheboys Hall of a Gothic mausoleum dates all the way back to the Cyndi Lauper era.

Needless to say, the salaried stenographers up in the press gallery were happy to take the hopeychanger-in-chief at his word on the facts of the case. But even more striking is how indifferent they were to the bigger question: If a schoolhouse has peeling paint and leaking ceilings, what's the best way to fix it? Applying for federal funds and processing the building maintenance through a huge continental bureaucracy? Or doing what my neighbors did when the (older than Dillon) grade-school bell tower was collapsing? The carpenters and painters donated their time, and the materials were paid for through community dances and bean suppers. If that sounds sick-makingly Norman Rockwell, well, take it from me, small-town life is hell and having to interact with folksy-type folks in a "tightly knit community" certainly takes its toll, and the commemorative photo montage of gnarled old Yankees in plaid looking colorful doesn't capture many of the disputes over the project. But forget the cloying small-town sentimentality: It's the quickest and cheapest way to resolve the problem.

It always is: A friend of mine is on the select board of a neighboring town. In recent years, the state highway department has condemned two bridges. With the first bridge, they were advised to apply for funds under the 80/20 state/town formula: The bridge has yet to be constructed and in that time the cost—including their 20 percent—has almost doubled. When the second bridge was condemned, the town rebuilt it themselves, for less than half of the first bridge's original 80/20 formula cost, and in a twentieth of the time. It's called the can-do spirit, not the can-apply-for-funding spirit.

Dillon, S.C., is a town of about 6,000 people. Is there really no way they can organize acceptable accommodation for a two-grade junior high school without petitioning the Sovereign in Barackingham Palace? To be fair to the good burghers of Dillon, they seem to be wearying of playing the peasant extras in Barack the O-mighty's crowd scenes. They were originally proposing a municipal bond to fund building improvements, and appear to have realized that being stuck in Stimulus Hell is a high price to pay for young Ty'Sheoma's photo op with Michelle. But, even if the federal behemoth were capable of timely classroom repainting from D.C. to Hawaii, consider the scale of government and the size of bureaucracy that would be required. Once such an apparatus is in place it won't content itself with paint jobs.

Tocqueville would weep. "It is in the township that the strength of free peoples resides," he wrote. "Municipal institutions are for liberty what primary schools are for science; they place it within reach of the people. . . . Without municipal institutions, a nation is able to give itself a free government, but it lacks the spirit of liberty."

The issue is not the decrepitude of the building but the decrepitude of liberty. Maybe the president can spend enough of our money to halt the degradation of infrastructure. The degradation of citizenship will prove harder to reverse. **NR**

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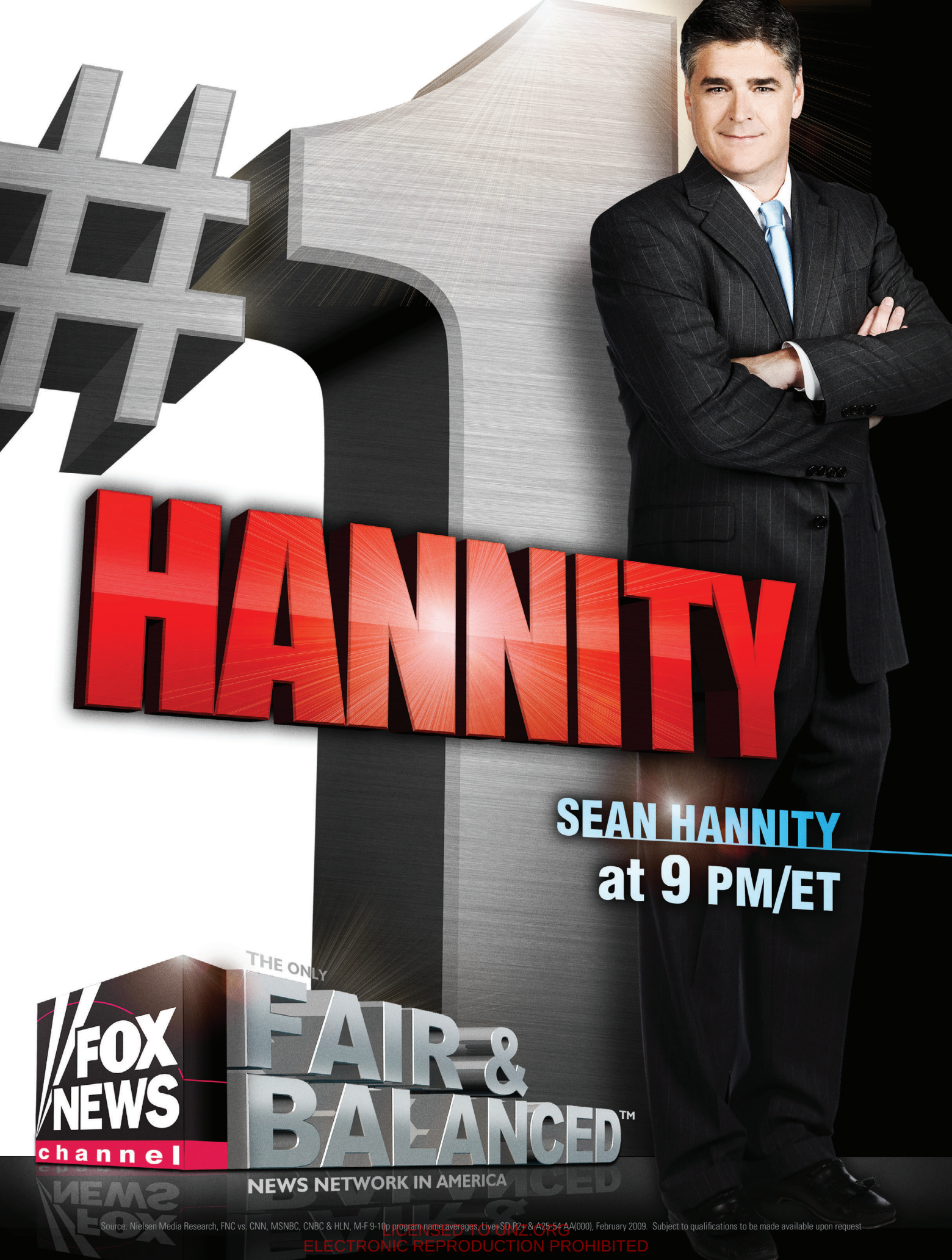

Source: Nielsen Media Research, FNC vs. CNN, MSNBC, CNBC & HLN, M-F 9-10p program name averages, Live+SD P2+ & A25-54 AA(000), February 2009. Subject to qualifications to be made available upon request

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